

GOING RETRO WITH JOHN CENA



SMACKDOWN

SMACKDOWN! MAGAZINE

BIZARRE!

Who's the most outrageous Superstar in WWE history?

LETHAL WEAPON

Can anyone stop Kenzo Suzuki?

FRENCH PHENOM

René Duprée vows to make SmackDown! his own

THE RAGE THAT DRIVES
"YOUR" AMERICAN HERO

ANGLE'S ANGER

PLUS!



Sizzling Sable
Poster Inside

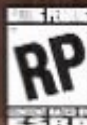
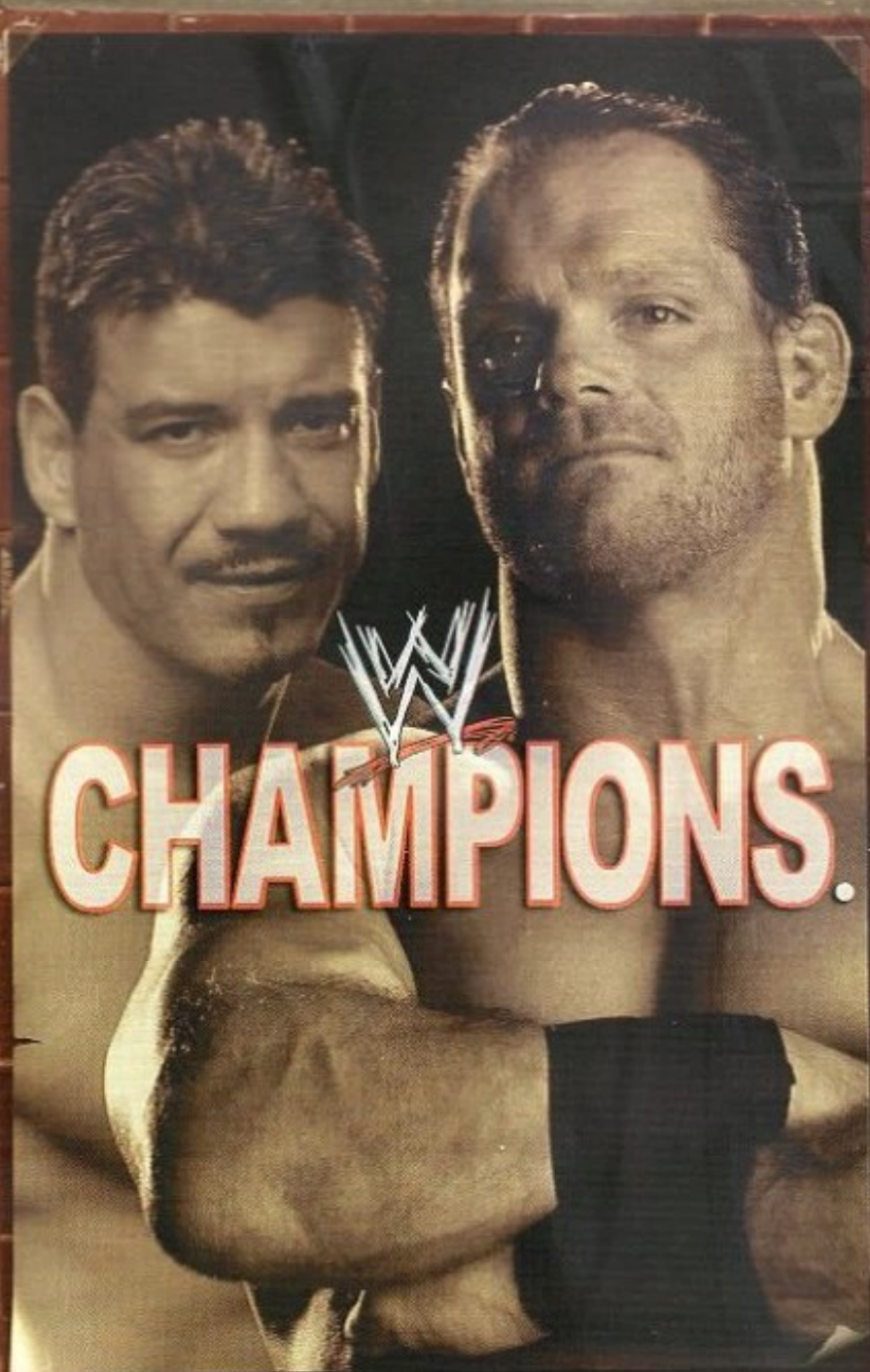
OCTOBER 2004

\$5.99 U.S. \$8.99 CANADA
PRINTED IN U.S.A.



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0 72246 47481 5



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... HAVE TO START SOMEWHERE.



On your way from the street to stardom you'll betray and be betrayed.
You'll face humiliation and taste revenge. And that's just the beginning.

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Great Karma

Dear Editor,
Wow! I can't tell you how much I enjoyed the article on Rob Van Dam ("Good Karma") in the August issue of *SmackDown! Magazine*. I think it's the best article you guys have ever published. There's so much more to Van Dam than what you see in the ring on Thursday nights, and I'm glad it was captured in the article. I hope he wins the WWE Championship real soon.

Gloria Hernandez
Oxnard, CA

Dear Editor,
As a longtime subscriber to WWE magazines, I was considering canceling my subscription to *SmackDown! Magazine* and just keeping my *Raw Magazine* subscription (*Raw Magazine* rocks!). Then, you put RVD on the cover. Well, you changed my mind! I love reading about Superstars away from the arena and this article had it all. Of course, RVD has it all, too! Here's to *SmackDown!'s* No. 1 free spirit—the best Superstar in the world today.

Shea Townsend
Bangor, ME

Rey Rules

Dear Editor,
Thanks for the great pictorial of Rey Mysterio ("Sky King," August *SmackDown!*). There's no doubt in my mind that he's the most exciting Superstar on *SmackDown!* It would be great if you could do a pictorial on a Superstar every month. I'd love to see one of Rico, Eddie Guerrero and John Cena. Thanks, and keep up the good work.

Sandy Muester
Bloomington, IN

Blackjack!

Dear Editor,
I couldn't have been more pleased to see the great Blackjack Mulligan in the August issue. I was there the day he and Blackjack Lanza won the tag team titles in Philadelphia in 1975. They were big, strong, rawboned, and

I thought they'd never lose. Of course, they did, to Tony Parisi and Louis Cerdan a few months later. Still, I consider the Blackjacks as one of the greatest tag teams ever.

Johnny Cuzart
Philadelphia, PA

Editorial Bias?

Dear Editor,
What in the world is wrong with you guys? René Duprée is the hottest rising star on all of *SmackDown!* and you guys have only written one story about him all year! Are you biased against the Quebec Phenom? I realize most American fans dislike him, but that doesn't mean you should ignore him. Show some dignity and write some articles on Duprée, the future WWE Champion!

Kurt Menal
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

Kidman Gets His Due

Dear Editor,
It's about time you featured the hottest and coolest Superstar in the world today, Billy Kidman ("My Favorite Match: Cruiserweight Chaos," August *SmackDown!*). The match he won at *Starrcade* in 1998 is also one of my favorites. I think he's terribly underrated and should get a chance to fight for the WWE Championship. How about putting a poster of Kidman in one of your upcoming issues?

Michelle Markus
Glen Rock, NJ

Rico-Mania

Dear Editor,
I'm so glad you now run "Rico's Runway" in *SmackDown! Magazine*. For my money, he's out-of-this-world handsome as well as stylish. Every month, I look forward to reading his column. It's funny and informative. Do you think he could give a few beauty tips to go along with whatever else he has to say? I would certainly love to hear what he thinks about clothes, grooming and accessories.

Sandy Jones
Dubuque, IA



SMACKDOWN! MAGAZINE
Volume 23 • No. 10

Publisher
Barry Werber

Creative Director
Tracey Thomas

Editorial

Managing Editor: Brian Salomon
Copy Chief: Michael Chiappetta
Copy Editor: Kevin Caldwell
Senior Staff Writers: Keith Elliot Greenberg,
Aaron Williams
Contributing Superstar Writer: Rico
Staff Writer: Anthony Cali
Editorial Assistant: Michael Dworkis

Design

Art Director: J. Michael Woodside
Associate Art Director: Chris Orsillo
Cartoonist: Chris Gilman

Photography

Director of Photography: Keville Carr
Senior Photography Editor: Frank Vitucci
Photography Editor: Meg Kahl
Assistant Photography Editor: Meg Reinhardt
Senior Staff Photographer: John Giannone
Archive Photographer: Steve Taylor
Contributing Photographers: Rich Ireda,
Craig Ambrose, Craig Melvin, David Gunn
Photography Assistants: Denise Cabbias, Ken O'Brien

Operations

Production Manager: Elizabeth McCollum
Business Manager: Ed Gager

Advertising Sales

SVP, North American Sales: Jim Rothschild
Director, Integrated Sales: David Cohn
Account Executives: Jamie Paul Seymour,
John DiCostanza
Phone: 212-593-2228
e-mail: wwwadsales@wwe.com

Circulation Services
National Publisher Services
Contact: aps1.com

Circulation/Subscription

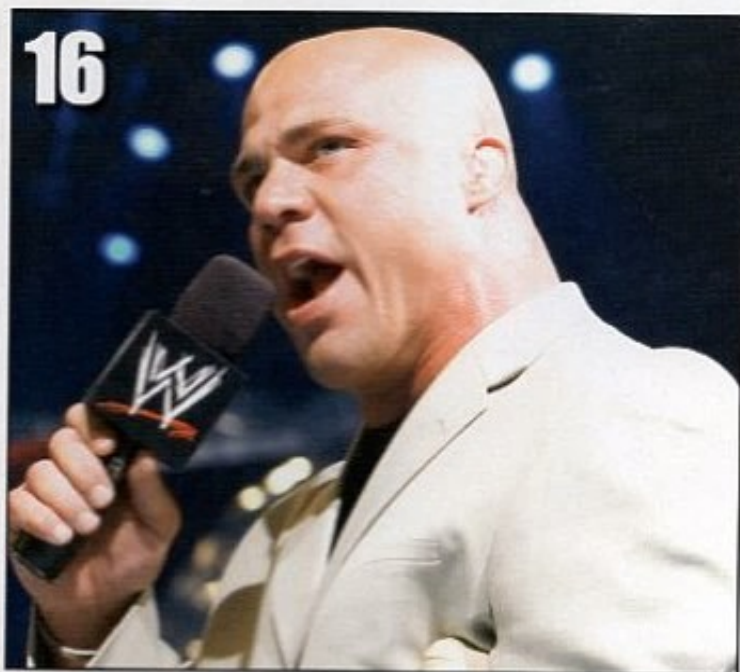
Customer Service: 1-888-WWE-SHOP (1-888-969-7467)
wwwshop.com/help
Subscriptions: www.wwe.com

WWE SmackDown! is the Official Publication of World Wrestling Entertainment (ISSN 1547-8379, USPS 0750-450). Canadian Publications Mail Sales Agreement No. C092990 is published every four weeks, 13 times a year, by World Wrestling Entertainment, Inc., 1241 East Main Street, Stamford, CT 06902, and published in Canada by World Wrestling Entertainment Canada, Inc. (GST No. R121095035), 2 Landing Square, Suite 1000, Willowdale, Ontario, Canada M2J 4P9. Basic subscription rates are \$26 for 13 issues and \$39 for 26 issues for U.S. and U.S. possessions. Canadian rates are \$31.00 for 13 issues and \$49.00 for 26 issues including 7% GST. Foreign rates are \$45.00 for 13 issues and \$75.00 for 26 issues. ALL ORDERS ARE PAYABLE IN U.S. FUNDS ONLY. NO FOREIGN CREDIT ORDERS WILL BE ACCEPTED. Periodical postage paid at Stamford, CT, and other additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to WWSMACKDOWN!, Post Office Box 485, Mount Morris, IL 61054-8393. Printed by Good Graphics, Inc., New York, NY. Distributed by Kable Distribution Services, 641 Lexington Ave., New York, NY 10022. World Wrestling Entertainment, the names of all World Wrestling Entertainment related and live programming, talent names, images, likenesses, slogans and wrestling moves, and all World Wrestling Entertainment logos are trademarks which are the exclusive property of World Wrestling Entertainment, Inc. The entire contents of this publication are copyright 2004 by World Wrestling Entertainment, Inc. All Rights Reserved. Ultimate Warrior is the trademark of Ultimate Creations, Inc., and is used with permission. Mick Foley is a trademark owned by Mick Foley and is used with permission. Nothing in this issue may be reproduced in any manner without the express written consent of World Wrestling Entertainment, Inc. World Wrestling Entertainment, Inc., is not responsible for unsolicited material sent to us.

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Features

16 Meet the Real Kurt Angle

Angle lied to the world, and now it's time to pay. Find out all about his undying hatred for Eddie Guerrero, and how it will come to a head at SummerSlam. Plus, our exclusive fan interview!

24 Throwback Time

Recently, John Cena had the chance to visit the headquarters of Mitchell & Ness, the company that makes all those cool hats and jerseys he wears. SmackDown! Magazine was there, and we have exclusive pix!

32 French Phenom

Since arriving on SmackDown!, René Duprée has reinvented himself, leaving his tag-team roots behind to become a top singles contender. We spoke to Mr. Duprée, and you might be surprised at what he had to say!

36 Ranking the Bad Guys

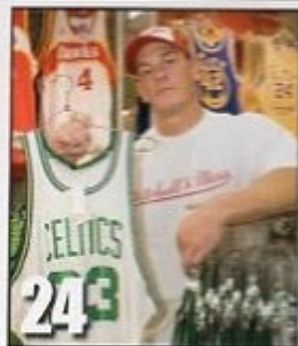
Back in the July issue, we asked for your votes on the greatest villains in WWE history, and after tallying them all up, it's time to announce the big winners!

38 It Doesn't Get Any Stranger

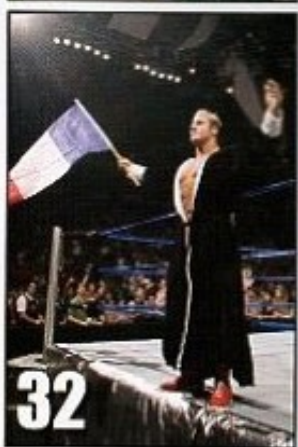
WWE has had more than its fair share of outrageous Superstars, but we managed to somehow boil it down to the 25 most unforgettable of the bunch. From the Red Rooster to the Gobbledy Cooker, they're all here.

50 The Bronze Warrior

From the Land of the Rising Sun, Kenzo Suzuki has invaded SmackDown!, and heaven help the rest of the roster. Find out all about how this ruthless Superstar learned the ropes.



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Cover Photo: Rich Freeda

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THE NEXT CRUISERWEIGHT INVITATIONAL

Numerous backstage sources are reporting that many cruiserweights are petitioning for another Cruiserweight Invitational match. The first-ever Invitational was held at *WrestleMania XX* and was among the more memorable encounters of the night. This time, however, they are reportedly calling for a battle royal—one where elimination would only occur by pinfall or submission. High-flyers like Billy Kidman, Rey Mysterio and Shannon Moore can take advantage of this, executing top rope maneuvers without fear of elimination. This type of match would allow participants to sneak outside the ring to retrieve tables and ladders, using them as tools to perform riskier moves.

FULL-BLOODED CHARITY

Nunzio and Johnny "The Bull" Stamboli appear to have put their mischievous ways behind them. The pair recently paid a visit to an elementary school and volunteered to give some class lectures. Our reporter got a peek at their lesson plan, which seemed to be very educational. Nunzio was found teaching a second-grade class the meaning of earning money through embezzlement, and Stamboli paid a visit to fourth-graders, where he held a heated discussion on the topic of extortion. In a truly noble act, they even held an assembly for middle-schoolers, where they showed a video about the safety of buckling your seatbelts when making a quick getaway.



LATINO REUNION?

Eddie Guerrero and Chavo Guerrero Jr. were seen backstage exchanging pleasantries before a recent *SmackDown!* live event. It would seem that since Chavo Classic made his departure, Eddie and Chavo may be looking to reunite sometime soon in the spirit of family unity. Perhaps the two miss the times spent lying, cheating and stealing



together. Going after the WWE Tag Team Championship had kept them together in the past, and nothing would make the Guerrero household prouder than to see the two shining stars as champions together again. Stay tuned to *SmackDown!* to see what happens next in this family saga.



NEED HOT STOCKS? TAKE STOCK IN JOHN "BRADSHAW" LAYFIELD

John "Bradshaw" Layfield will entertain questions regarding his near 10-year career in WWE, his greatest matches, and his financial success. What better subject to follow the amazing success of the first two fan interviews? We want your questions for the fastest-rising blue-chipper on *SmackDown!* Send your questions to:

"Ask JBL"

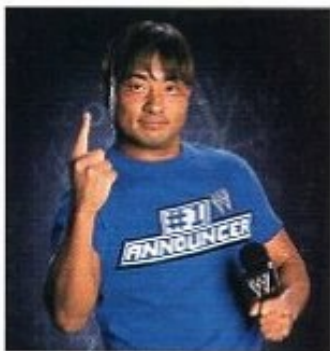
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Or e-mail: SDMag@wwe.com
(Subject: "Ask JBL")

Pick up a copy of the December issue of *SmackDown! Magazine* to see if John "Bradshaw" Layfield answered your question!

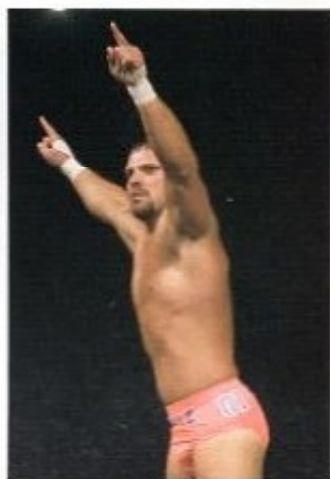
TEAM PLAYER?

As of press time, there were rumors that announce duo of Michael Cole and Tazz may turn into a three-man team. It would seem that Funaki, a dedicated member of the *SmackDown!* backstage team, may be the frontrunner for this position. Although Funaki is still an active competitor, he enjoys conducting backstage interviews, revealing info that no other announcer has been able to get Superstars to confess, and giving fans more than they ever could want. If there indeed turns out to be a third man added to the tandem of Cole and Tazz, Funaki may well be the man holding the mic.



NOBLE CAUSE

Nunzio and Johnny Stamboli are not the only ones who are involved in charitable acts. Jamie Noble has also been giving back to his community. He has a good amount of money left from his Aunt Lucille, who passed away over a year ago, and has been putting it to good use after separating with his ex-girlfriend, Nidia. He was seen at his old trailer park residence cutting a check for a 10-foot-tall projection television monitor and a computer for everyone in the park area to share. Noble also purchased classic arcade games which residents can deposit a quarter into for game time. Noble said that he would be in charge of supervising the television, computer usage and gaming activities. At the end of each week, he will put in a call to Nunzio to collect the money spent on video games.



SmackDown! Tour Guide

10/3: East Rutherford, NJ
No Mercy
7:45 pm

10/4: Waterbury, CT

10/5: Boston, MA
SmackDown!
7:30 pm

10/7: Belfast, Ireland

10/8: Belfast, Ireland

10/9: Florence, Italy
10/10: Turin, Italy

10/11: Nottingham,
England

10/12: Manchester,
England
SmackDown!

10/17: Rockford, IL
SmackDown!
7:00 pm

10/18: Minneapolis, MN
7:00 pm

10/23: Ottawa, Ontario
7:30 pm

10/24: Montreal,
Quebec
2:00 pm

10/25: Topeka, KS
7:00 pm

10/26: Omaha, NE
SmackDown!
7:30 pm

10/30: Ft. Lauderdale, FL
5:00 pm

10/31: Ft. Myers, FL
5:00 pm

*Schedule subject to change.

Ready for Teddy? Hail to The Chief

Don't hate on Theodore R. Long. He's a man on a mission. And, as of July, he's been given the greatest platform of all from which to further that mission. It may take a while to get used to the sight of Long parading around as *SmackDown!* commissioner, but I suggest you get used to it, because he's not going anywhere. And I, for one, couldn't be happier.

Not since the days of Bobby "The Brain" Heenan and "The Mouth of the South" Jimmy Hart has a professional mouthpiece caused this kind of controversy and done such an excellent job of getting his points across as Long. Love him or hate him, you have to admire the way he can capture the attention of a crowd and hold it for as long as he wants.

Ever since he relinquished his officiating position last year for the more glamorous world of managing, Long has gone on to become one of WWE's more intriguing figures. First making waves on *Raw* with protégés like Rodney Mack and Jazz, Long made the jump to *SmackDown!* in the draft lottery last spring, and hasn't looked back. What he has accomplished with Mark Jindrak is nothing short of astonishing. When Long first approached Jindrak, the Superstar was coming off a tag-team partnership with Garrison Cade and struggling to find himself in the singles division. With Long at his side, he was transformed into the "Reflection of Perfection," and went on a very impressive undefeated streak on *Velocity*.

The magic that Long is capable of will surely be translated to the entire *SmackDown!* franchise now that he is at the helm of the operation. He may not have been as high-profile as Stephanie McMahon and Kurt Angle, or have as

much experience running a wrestling company as Paul Heyman, but don't underestimate this cagey veteran. Long has refereed and managed since the 1980s, guiding the careers of men like Undertaker, Faarooq and Sycho Sid. In that time, he's developed one of the keenest, most focused minds in sports-entertainment today.

His comments have often been inflammatory, and his entire demeanor is enough to send fans into a chorus of boos. But Teddy Long has been able to turn that into momentum—for himself, and for those with whom he has chosen to associate. He has helped empower those who he felt were being "held down by The Man." He's defended them against those who insist on consuming a steady diet of "Haterade." The energy he carries has been transferred to others and has made them great.

Now, that energy will be transferred to *SmackDown!* as a whole. You may not agree with all the decisions he's made thus far—even I haven't. But has there ever been a leader on any level—national, local, corporate or otherwise—whose every move was absolutely beyond reproach? Of course not.

One thing you can count on is that Theodore R. Long will take a stand. He won't be afraid to make his feelings known. He'll speak out loud and clear, for everyone to hear. And while he's



doing that, I guarantee you won't be able to take your eyes off him.

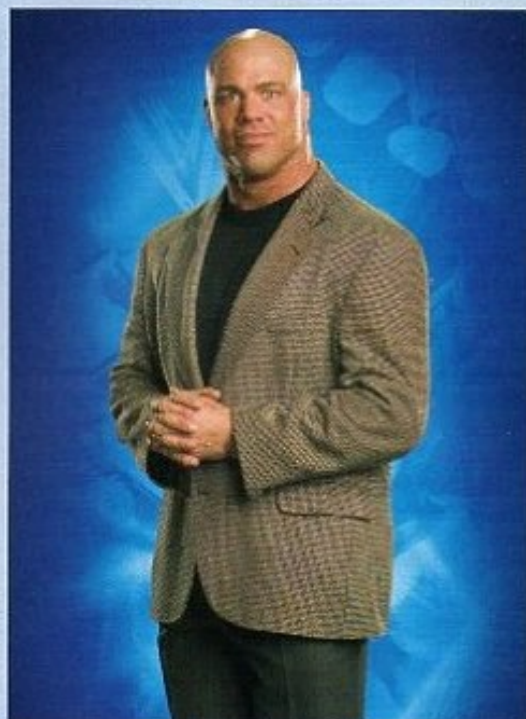
In short, Theodore R. Long will be the embodiment of what the 19th century British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli once said: "With words we govern men."

Ya feel me, playa? ■

Match the following events with the arenas in which they were held:

1. *WrestleMania III*
2. *SummerSlam '99*
3. *WrestleMania VI*
4. *In Your House: A Cold Day in Hell*
5. *Royal Rumble '91*
6. *King of the Ring '99*
7. *Bad Blood '97*
8. *SummerSlam '94*
9. *The Wrestling Classic*
10. *SummerSlam '02*
11. *Vengeance '03*
12. *In Your House: Break Down '98*
13. *SummerSlam '89*
14. *King of the Ring '96*
15. *Royal Rumble '90*

- A. Richmond Coliseum
- B. Kiel Center
- C. Pepsi Center
- D. United Center
- E. SkyDome
- F. Cops Coliseum
- G. Target Center
- H. Nassau Coliseum
- I. Orlando Arena
- J. Rosemont Horizon
- K. The Mecca
- L. Meadowlands Arena
- M. Greensboro Coliseum
- N. Miami Arena
- O. Pontiac Silverdome



Match the Superstars with who they beat for their first WWE Championship:



1. Andre the Giant
2. Stan Stasiak
3. Hulk Hogan
4. Kurt Angle
5. Bob Backlund
6. Sycho Sid
7. Shawn Michaels
8. The Rock
9. Iron Sheik
10. Bruno Sammartino
11. Pedro Morales
12. Bret "Hit Man" Hart
13. Randy Savage
14. Eddie Guerrero
15. John "Bradshaw" Layfield

- A. Iron Sheik
- B. Shawn Michaels
- C. Buddy Rogers
- D. Brock Lesnar
- E. Ric Flair
- F. Bret "Hit Man" Hart
- G. Ted DiBiase
- H. Bob Backlund
- I. Mankind
- J. "Superstar" Billy Graham
- K. Ivan Koloff
- L. The Rock
- M. Pedro Morales
- N. Eddie Guerrero
- O. Hulk Hogan

Answers: 1-O, 2-G, 3-A, 4-L, 5-F, 6-B, 7-F, 8-J, 9-I, 10-H, 11-C, 12-E, 13-L, 14-K, 15-N

WWE's Top 10 Most Un-stylish Superstars

In collaboration with the "Most Outrageous Superstars" feature published in this very issue, I have decided to put together a little list of my own.

As I lay here half asleep in my most comfortable Cashmere robe and velvet slippers, I've decided to take a look at 10 individuals/tag teams who changed the face of sports-entertainment forever. These are men with wardrobes so distasteful and repulsive that they were actually good examples of how *not* to dress. And not to say that many of today's Superstars aren't complete fashion nightmares, but most of them pale in comparison to the ones discussed below.

10. Man Mountain Rock: I don't even know where to begin. This overweight behemoth wore psychedelic tights that were two sizes too small and made him look like a hippy sausage. I've heard wearing ugly tie-dyed paraphernalia with bright red hair is actually against the law in several states, so he should have been arrested on the spot and locked up without bail.

9. The Killer Bees: You have to wonder what would possess two grown men to wear matching black-and-yellow bumblebee trunks. Either they found their gear at a garage sale for a really good price, or they actually thought they might frighten opponents by wiggling their derrieres in the air and threatening to sting with their imaginary stingers.

8. Tugboat Thomas: A 380-pound man should not be wearing a horizontal-striped tank top in the first place, but when it's a red-and-white sailor shirt

with white pants, that's completely inexcusable. I don't know who advised Tugboat to dress himself like that, but they should have been taken out to sea and left there.

7. Doink the Clown: Perhaps the most amusing Superstar of all time, Doink was a real barrel of laughs. But the reason people chuckled at him wasn't because of his antics, it was because they couldn't understand how anyone with even a touch of style would ever wear a green wig and multi-colored bodysuit. He still makes me laugh just thinking about it.

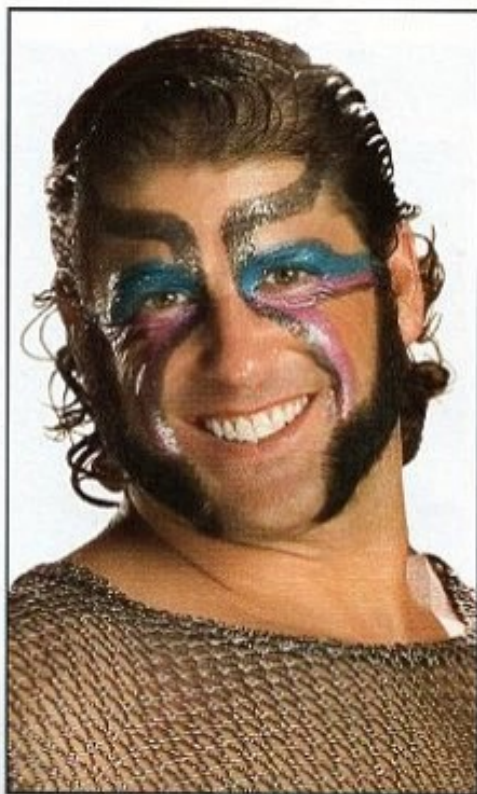
6. The Bushwhackers: If you think the Dudley Boyz were the first team to rock tasteless gray-and-white camouflage pants, you're dead wrong. Years earlier, the filthy, toothless Bushwhackers innovated this God-awful look while they licked peoples heads and pounded down cans of disgusting sardines. I guess that when it came to fashion, Butch & Luke had no taste or sense of smell.

5. Giant Gonzalez: Here we have an 8-foot tall giant, wearing a skin-tight muscle suit with huge fur shoulder pads. *Puh-leeze!* Undertaker did society a huge favor when he rid the business of this overgrown heathen.

4. Hulk Hogan: I'll give credit where credit is due: Hogan was one of the greatest Superstars ever, but that doesn't exclude him from this list. During the Hulkster's last WWE tenure, he demonstrated a steady collection of the absolute ugliest tie-dyed, red-and-yellow tights I've ever seen. They didn't tarnish his legendary career, but they sure made me wonder if he was beginning to go blind.

3. 1-2-3 Kid: After he defeated Razor Ramon in one of the most shocking moments in Raw history, the 1-2-3 Kid celebrated his win by buying multiple lame blue singlets with the numbers "1", "2" and "3" sewed all over them. If I were in charge of the state athletic commission, I'd have banned him from competing in those outfits.

2. Bastion Booger: Bastion wins the award for the most disgusting Superstar

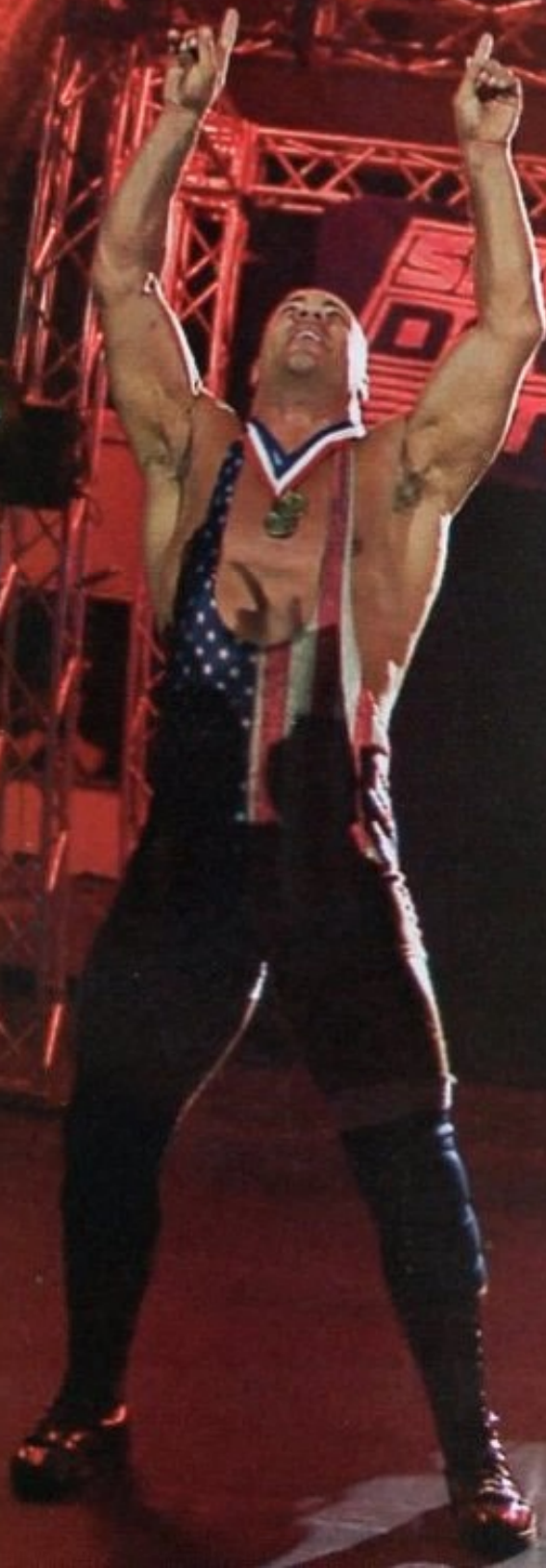


of all time. His dirty, smelly, unkempt gray costume made him resemble a beached whale, and considering how he rarely, if ever, washed himself, he probably smelled like a dead sewer rat. Not that the Booger Man could have done much more to make himself presentable, but he certainly could have put forth a little more effort.

1. Kamala: The Ugandan Headhunter wins the prize. His bulbous, pear-shaped body should have been buried underneath layers and layers of baggy clothing, instead of boldly displayed for the world to see. Now, don't get me wrong, I have nothing against leopard-skin loin cloths and body paint, but this is probably the last person in the world I'd ever want to see them on. Had I been this ruffian's handler, I'd have taken him straight to Armani, bought him a smorgasbord of stylish new clothes, and turned the wild beast into a sophisticated gentleman. ■

[Editor's note: The opinions found in this column are those of Rico, and not necessarily the opinions of WWE or SmackDown! Magazine.]

Never



Say Die

By Anthony Cali

Kurt Angle Fights Through Serious Injuries to Chase His Destiny

Some say history repeats itself. For Kurt Angle, that statement couldn't hold more truth. Plagued by injuries throughout his amateur wrestling career, Angle overcame all and defied the odds to win two national championships and an Olympic gold medal. Eight years later, he finds himself facing similar circumstances, desperate for gold again.

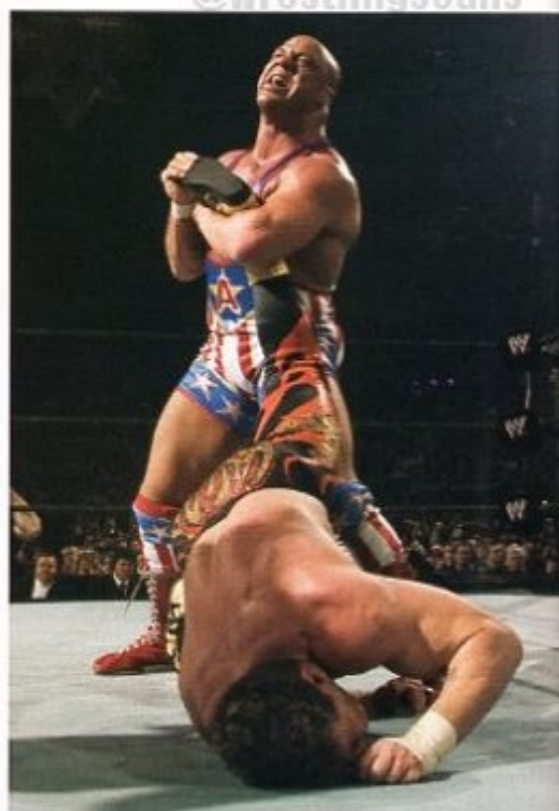
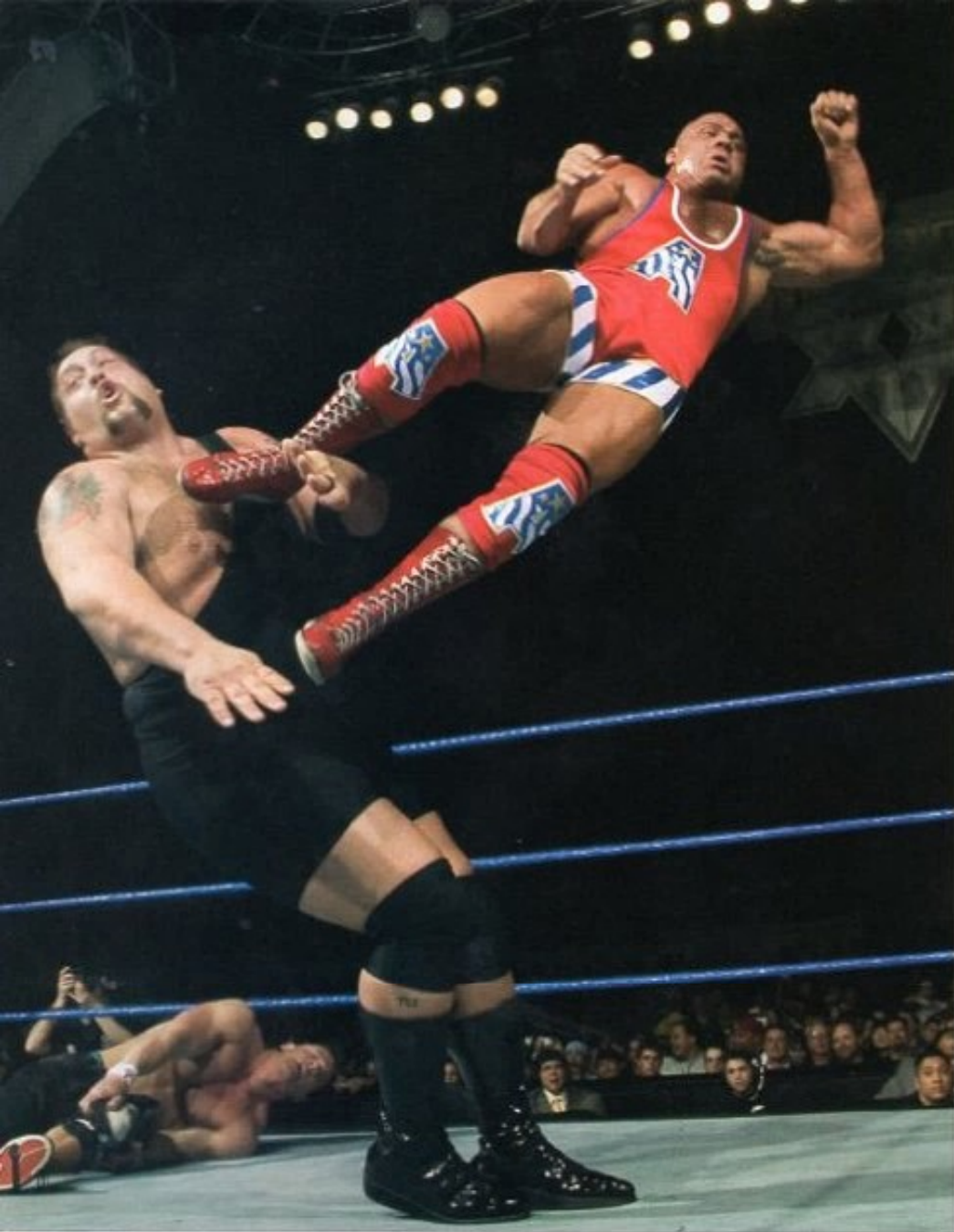
Anyone who has followed Angle's career knows that nothing or no one can stop him from accomplishing whatever

he sets out to do. No injury, opponent, or setback has ever stopped Kurt from finding a way to secure victory. In fact, when things seem to be their absolute worst for Kurt, he is at his best. While many also thought his latest series of injuries might have spelled the end for the Pittsburgh native, Kurt Angle is focused on triumph once again.

"This situation is very similar to the one I was in back in '96," admits Angle. "The only difference is that I'm not just preparing for five matches in two days. At the '96 games, I knew it was my last shot, so I went out there and gave it

everything I had, but here, I have to train to last as long as I can."

Injuries have long been Angle's nemesis. But after his most recent setback, something snapped in Angle. The onetime milk-drinking American Hero with moral values and "Three I's" has become a mean-spirited machine, hell-bent on victories and capturing titles; a man willing to hurt anyone, or do anything necessary to get there. Perhaps Angle has become the antithesis of his old self. Maybe he has simply changed with the times. Either way, Angle's main purpose in



Though Kurt Angle has suffered several injuries throughout his storied career, he's also dealt out his share of pain. At left, he dropkicks Big Show. Above, he puts the Ankle Lock on Eddie Guerrero.

life is to go down in history as the absolute best ever.

"I've been here 4½ years, and I still have a lot to prove," Angle says. "I could have won another gold medal in 2000. I actually would've been better the second time around. But something told me to move on, and I decided to let it go.

"Once I got to WWE, I focused on becoming the best ever, but I'm not there yet. The only thing that's lacking in my career is time. I feel that I have to put 10 years in to be the best ever, and if I can do that, I don't think anybody will come close to me. Nobody has caught onto the sport quicker, or has a knack and a talent for it like I do. I take pride

in that. I've been able to pick it up, swallow it, and utilize my ability better than anybody. That's just the way I am. And right now, the only thing I want is to be considered the best."

It seems that Angle's biggest enemy in that quest is his own body. Though athletically gifted as one of the world's elite athletes, staying healthy has proved difficult for the rugged competitor.

His physical setbacks started early, as injuries hindered both his wrestling and football careers throughout high school. He seriously damaged both knees and ankles, dislocated a shoulder and broke his left arm. During his junior year, the sciatic

nerve in his back was so inflamed, he was forced to receive several shots of Novocain to dull the pain.

In college, he broke his nose twice, dislocated a shoulder—causing him to miss 10 matches—and also dislocated every finger on both of his hands at least once. This made it extremely hard for Angle to compete, as he relied on grip strength to lock opponents in various holds. During his sophomore and junior years, he also suffered three more knee injuries, two of which required surgery. Yet Angle never once considered quitting.

"I've always had some kind of injury," says Angle, "but they only tend to push me harder. I was raised to work around whatever setbacks I was suffering from, whether it was for myself or for the betterment of the team, and I've always found ways of training around injuries. But college was pretty hard on me. I missed part of the season in every year of college but my first, and during my sophomore year, I hurt my knee the week before the nationals. Somehow, I still managed to win, which was pretty

amazing, considering I had to have surgery immediately afterwards."

The following year, Angle injured his knee—tearing three ligaments and some cartilage—five weeks before nationals. Initially, Angle was told he wouldn't be able to wrestle, but he sought out another opinion and found a doctor that allowed him to compete in one more tournament before undergoing another surgery.

While training for the Olympics a few years later, Angle's injuries continued to stockpile. He broke both of his hands, pulled his groin muscle, and completely tore his hamstring. But his worst injury occurred four months before the Games, when he landed wrong during a match, and broke his neck.

"Giving up never crossed my mind," says Angle. "This was what I wanted since I was a kid, so I just kept pushing myself until I got it done. Even though there wasn't much they could do for my neck, I was going to fulfill my dream. I really couldn't train the way I wanted to. All I could do was run, lift some weights and do light drills.

"I'll always feel the effects of that injury, too," he continues. "It's constant pain, and something I will have to deal with every day for the rest of my life. There really isn't much I can



do. I've learned to live with it, and I'm content. Was it worth it? Yeah, it was, and if I had to do it over, I wouldn't change a thing."

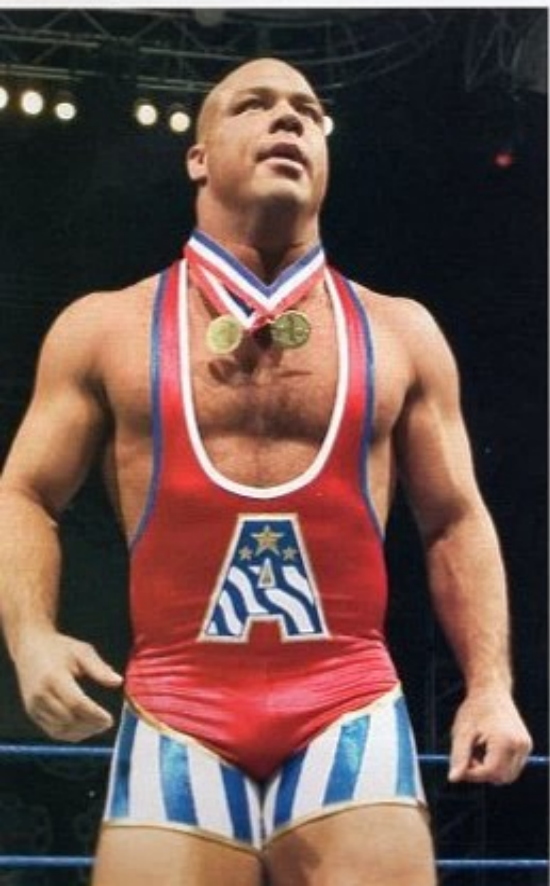
After winning the gold, Angle took a few years off to rest his body, and it wasn't until he'd been in WWE for four years that he finally decided to seek medical attention. By that point, the pain had worsened to the point that he couldn't summon the energy to get out of bed. His shoulder and arm were completely numb, and he experienced sharp pain in both his neck and arm. It was then he realized that he'd no longer be able to avoid surgery.

"I never once thought that my career was over," says Angle, "but I was concerned, and when I went down to see Dr. [Lloyd] Youngblood, he told me that my spine looked a 75-years-old's. I had five levels of problems. If he'd fused my neck, I'd never be able to turn it again, so I went to Dr. [Hae-Dong] Jho. He performed minimally invasive surgery, which allowed me to keep the flexibility in my neck."

The gold medals around Kurt Angle's neck prove that he's a winner, but his goal is much higher than that. He wants to be called the best ever.

After coming back, Angle took a vicious steel-chair shot to the head, and injured a new level of vertebrae. As usual, he continued to compete, until finally accepting a position as the general manager of *SmackDown!*, figuring he'd be able to stay a focal point of the show without having to endure the physicality of a day-to-day schedule of competition. But as Angle convalesced, a fire inside of him continued to rage. Eventually it became so strong that it led a serious, more focused Angle back to the ring.

"I went over to Japan, and the ovation I received on the second night was unbelievable," he says. "It made me realize how much the fans appreciate my work. They may not have liked me as G.M., or even as a person, but when it comes down to it, they respect Kurt Angle the wrestler. For a long time, I did what people considered funny things, and fans began to take me less seriously. Basically, I felt I needed a change. I needed to become more of a threat. So rather than wearing a wig and a goofy little cowboy hat, I'm out there breaking people's ankles and showing them that I'm for real." ■



any ideas?

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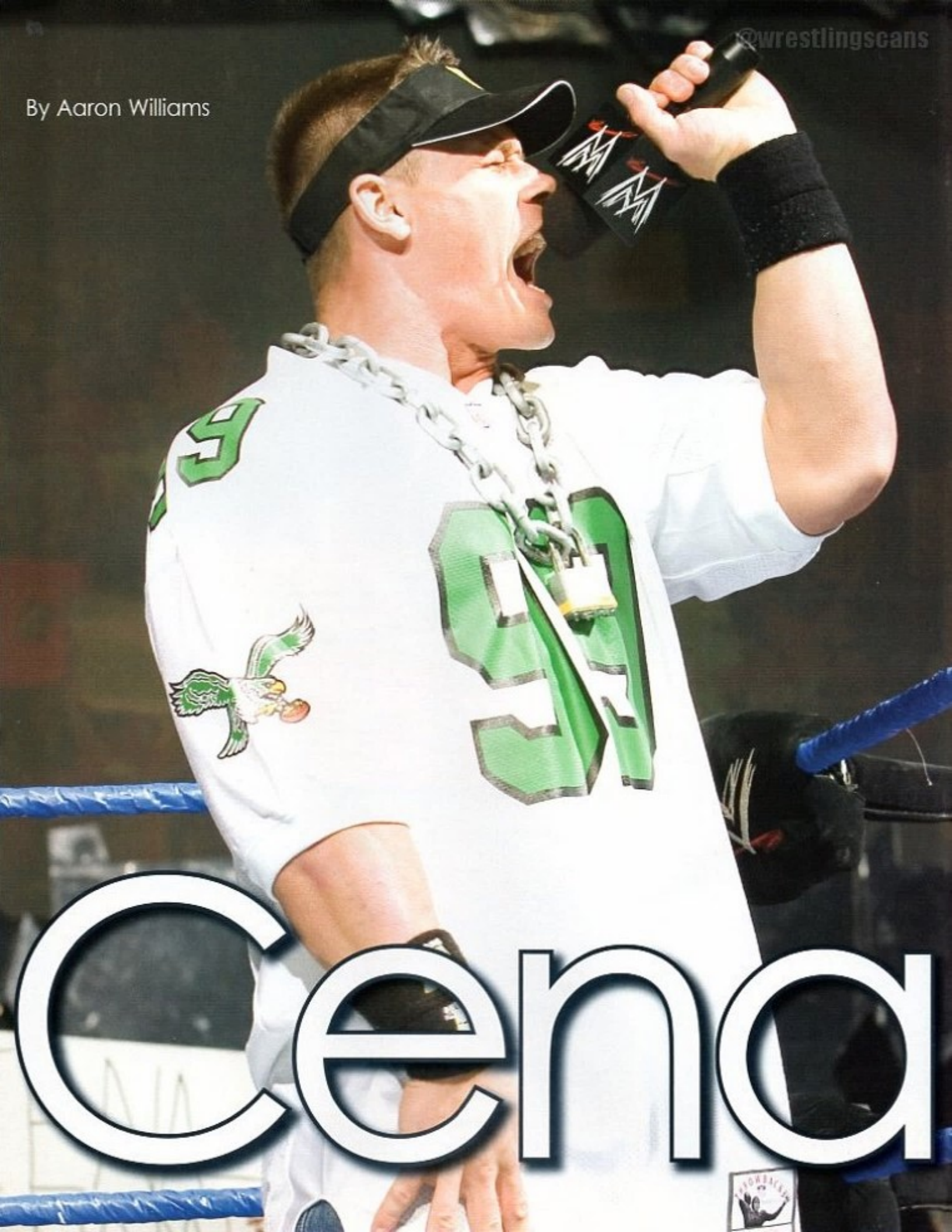
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By Aaron Williams



Cena



Whether John Cena's sporting a Jerome Brown Philadelphia Eagles' throwback (left), or checking out the jerseys of Celtics' legend Larry Bird (above) and Braves' pitcher Phil Niekro (above, right), he always has a story to go with the gear.



Question:

What do John Cena, Allen Iverson, Shaquille O'Neal, Jason Kidd and Jermaine O'Neal have in common?

If you answered that they are all great athletes who transcend their sport, you're right. But, that's not the answer we're looking for.

Here's another clue:

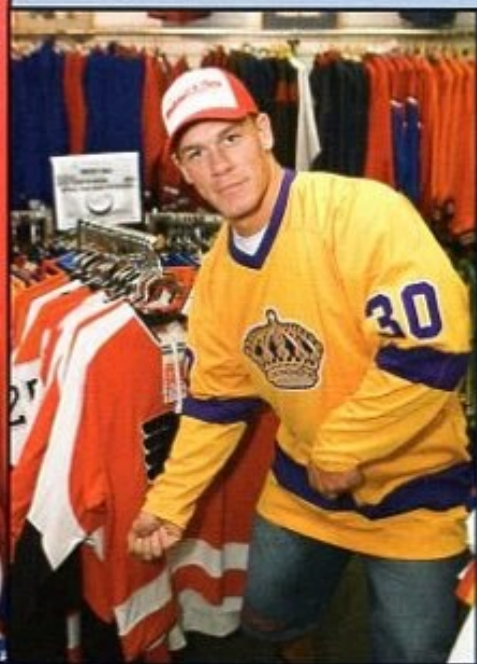
Snoop Dogg, Fabolous, Ludacris and the Cash Money Millionaires also have this in common with the Doctor of Thuganomics.

Yes, they are all great entertainers who have huge followings in the hip-hop world and beyond. Correct again, but that's not the answer we were looking for either.

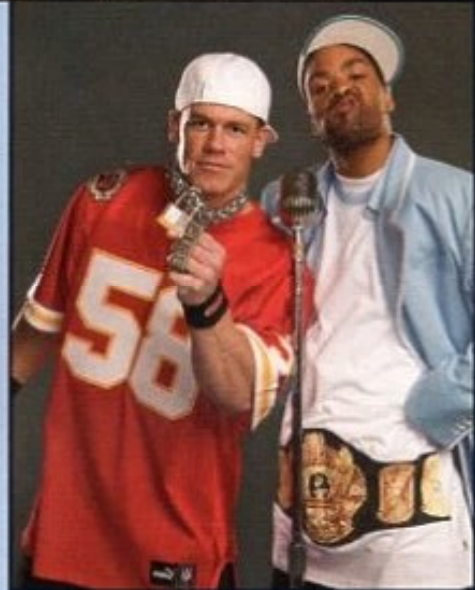
Here's a final clue: Take a look at what John Cena wears to the ring, and then check out some pictures of Shaq away from the court, or watch a hip-hop video.

Got it now? When it comes to fashion, these guys are not only in style, they are old-school. And when it comes to throwback jerseys, there's only one place they go to shop: Mitchell & Ness of Philadelphia.

Style



At left, Cena—here with hip-hop icon Method Man—sports his favorite throwback, a game-worn jersey of the late, great Kansas City linebacker Derrick Thomas, who holds the NFL record with seven sacks in one game. Above, Cena checks out what's new at M&N.



For Cena, wearing a Larry Bird Celtics jersey or a Jerome Brown Eagles throwback is more than just a fashion statement. It's about bringing back memories of great times and great players.

Every throwback Cena owns has a story behind it, and a story he's more than happy to recount. Don't think for a minute that he's some Johnny-come-lately to the sports world, getting in on the latest trend. Cena knows his sports.

SmackDown! Magazine accompanied Cena on a recent visit to Mitchell & Ness and we, unfortunately, decided to put him to the test when it came to throwbacks and sports knowledge. Needless to say, he made us regret the now-absurd notion that we could match sports knowledge him.

We picked up a 1971 Oakland A's Reggie Jackson throwback and queried him on the A's. He proceeded to lecture us on Reggie and many of his teammates, including Vida "True" Blue, Joe Rudi and Jim "Catfish" Hunter.

Figuring that because he grew up near Boston, he might solely know American League history, we next decided to try his knowledge of the National League. We brought out a 1981 Atlanta Braves Phil Niekro road jersey and asked for the 411 on it.

Much to our chagrin, he regaled us with stories of watching the Braves on cable TV as a kid before lecturing us on the nuances of Niekro's knuckleball. He even threw in a few facts about the Hall of Famer's brother, Joe, who also played in the majors.

We quickly found out that challenging Cena on sports is as dumb as challenging him in the ring, so we turned our questions away from sports history and asked him if there are any team's jerseys he won't wear.

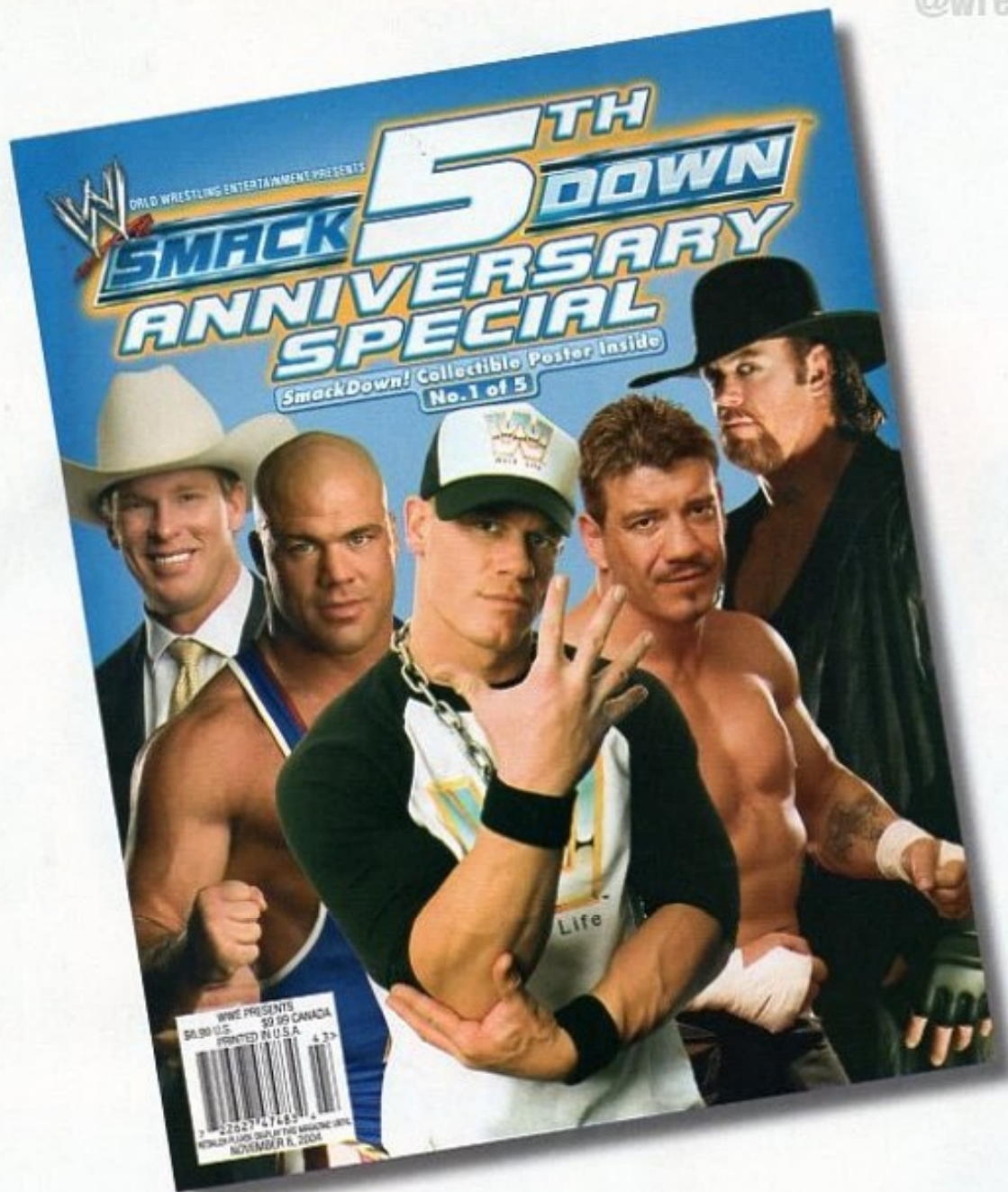
"As long as I can remember something about it affecting my life, I'll wear it," he says. "I've even worn a New York Yankees throwback. And, it wasn't just a Yankees jersey; it was a Roger Clemens', the ultimate turncoat. So, I'm going to hell for sure. The only

thing I won't wear is a Redskins jersey, but that's because the Redskins are [longtime *SmackDown!* ring announcer Tony] Chimel's favorite team. He probably wants me to come to the ring in an old Sam Huff jersey, but that ain't gonna happen."

The first throwback Cena ever wore was a 1979 Pittsburgh Pirates Willie Stargell jersey. Since then, he's amassed close to 500 throwbacks, most of which he gets at Mitchell & Ness, the exclusively licensed manufacturer of NBA, NFL, NHL, and Major League Baseball authentic vintage clothing.

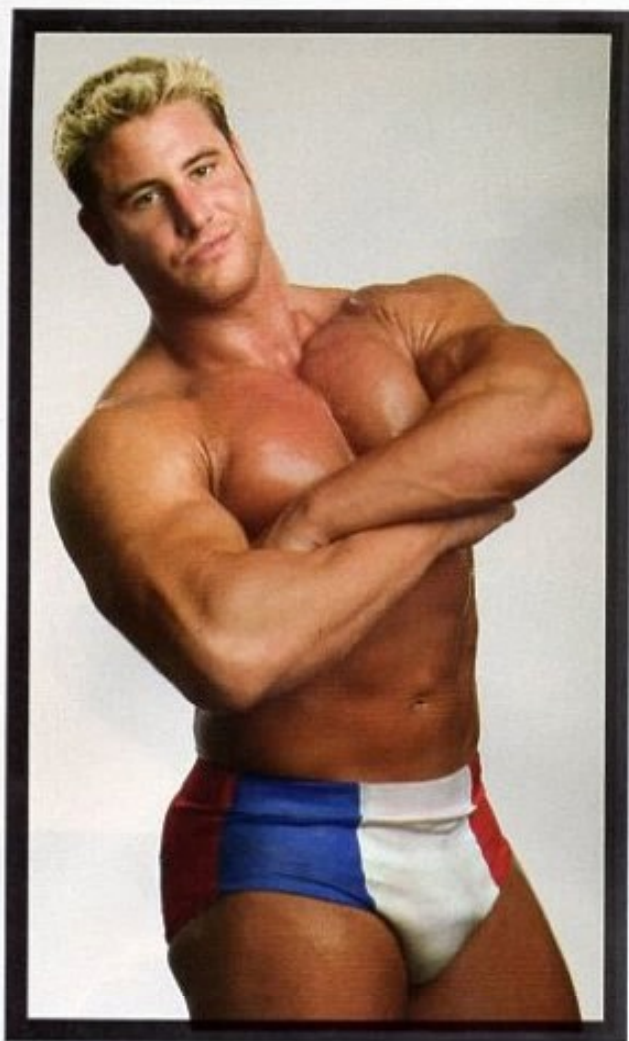
Whenever Cena came to Philadelphia, he'd stop by the store and pick up a few jerseys. At first, he slipped in the door unnoticed, but when the store's employees started going to WWE events and crowds started showing up whenever Cena appeared, M&N owner Peter Capolino knew that someone special was walking through his door.

"The first time I saw John, I didn't know who he was because I didn't follow sports-entertainment," Capolino says. "I just saw this big, good-looking guy buying jerseys. The next thing I knew, all my employees were going to see him wrestle. When I got to know John, I realized what a sports fan he was. He just kept wearing our jerseys



Now On Sale!

To celebrate the fifth anniversary of WWE's prime-time UPN network juggernaut, we've assembled the greatest moments, greatest matches and greatest photos from *SmackDown!*'s illustrious history. This one's a must-have for any true WWE fanatic!



For René Duprée, A New Look, A New Show, But the Same Attitude

BY ANTHONY CALI

LE MAGNIFIQUE

René Duprée's life has changed dramatically in 2004, and the French phenom wouldn't have it any other way.

The former World Tag Team champ was drafted by *SmackDown!* a few months ago, and thrust into unpredictable new terrain. And, to make matters worse, he had to do it all by himself. Many speculated that this move would be a bad one for Duprée, believing that he hadn't absorbed enough experience to branch off into singles competition. They were wrong.

Since moving to Thursday nights, Duprée has taken his career to new heights. On his first night in, he made an immediate impact when he targeted John Cena, and quickly immersed himself in the chase for the United States Championship. Though he didn't capture the prestigious title, he did



Since being drafted to *SmackDown!* in March, Duprée has become one of the biggest stars on the Thursday night program.

show the world exactly what he's made of, and why many believe he is the future of WWE.

At just 20 years old, Duprée is already leaps and bounds ahead of where a person his age should be. He has been co-holder of the World Tag Team title and competed against nearly all of the top talent *Raw* had to offer. And while not the most popular athlete on the roster—especially in the U.S.—fans do respect what Duprée's capable of doing in the ring.

"I'm gradually coming into my own," Duprée says. "Sure, it's much easier being part of a tag team—because you always have a partner to rely on in case something goes wrong—but I'm enjoying being a singles wrestler a hell of a lot more, and there's much more opportunity on *SmackDown!* Much more.

"As far as being a member of La Résistance goes, I don't miss being a part of that group at all," he says with a slight grin. "I have no problem with them. We just have different goals right now, and I really don't keep in touch with them as much as I should, either. I haven't talked to them in quite a while. I should give them a call one of these days to see how they're doing."

Backstage, Duprée tends to keep to himself. He is rarely seen socializing with the other Superstars, and instead reads French newspapers and talks on the phone in his native tongue. Upon speaking with Duprée, it seems possible that the cause of this isolation may be due to his wealth of talent at such a young age.

"I have so many advantages over all the rest of the *SmackDown!*



Results of Our
Greatest Villains Poll

THE BEST OF THE WORST

In the July issue, we published a list of our picks for the 25 greatest villains in WWE history. We then asked you to vote for the single most evil, heinous, despicable individual that ever stepped in a WWE ring. As always, you came through big-time, and the results were very interesting.

Taking nearly one-quarter of the vote, Kane, the "Big Red Monster," gets the nod from our readers as the greatest villain in WWE history. Apparently, sealing Undertaker in a coffin, setting Jim Ross on fire and forcing Lita to have your baby counts for something! Now, we all know Kane is currently a *Raw* Superstar, and this is *SmackDown! Magazine*, but remember, our poll covers the entire history of WWE and included current Superstars from both brands.

Triple H made it a close contest and wound up as the first runner-up. His master manipulations over the years have certainly earned him the ire of legions of fans. For more old-school fans, "Rowdy" Roddy Piper was the villain of choice. There's no doubt that for any fan growing up in the 1980s, the "Rowdy Scot" was the epitome of evil as he waged his never-ending war against *Hulkamania*.

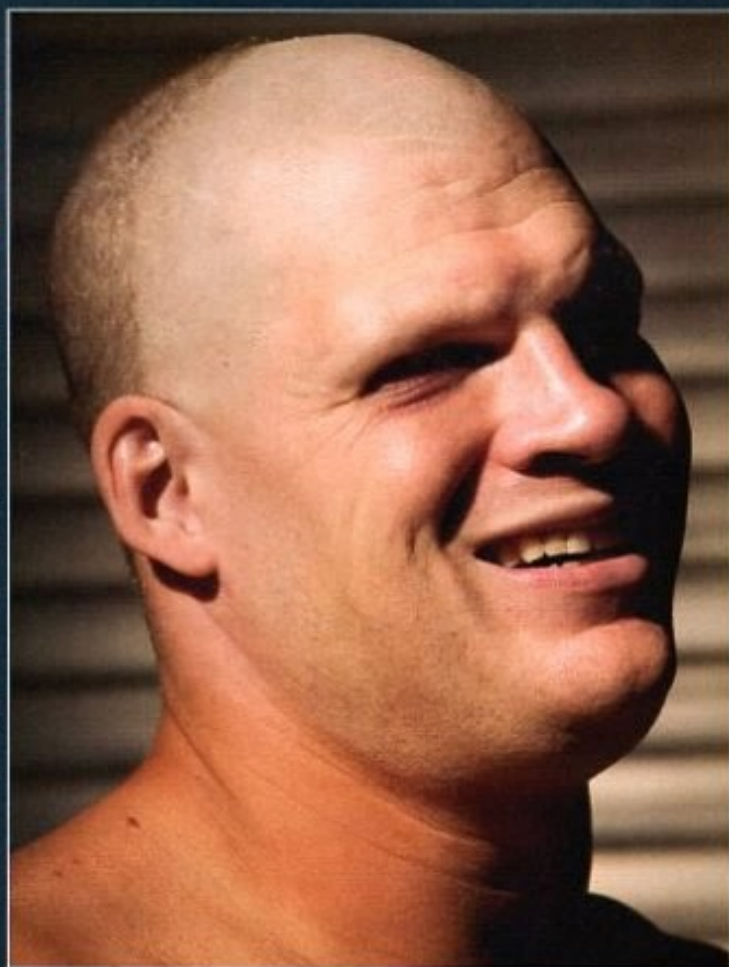
Rounding out the runners-up was the one-and-only Ric Flair, whose immense popularity over the years was probably the only thing stopping him from being voted greatest villain.

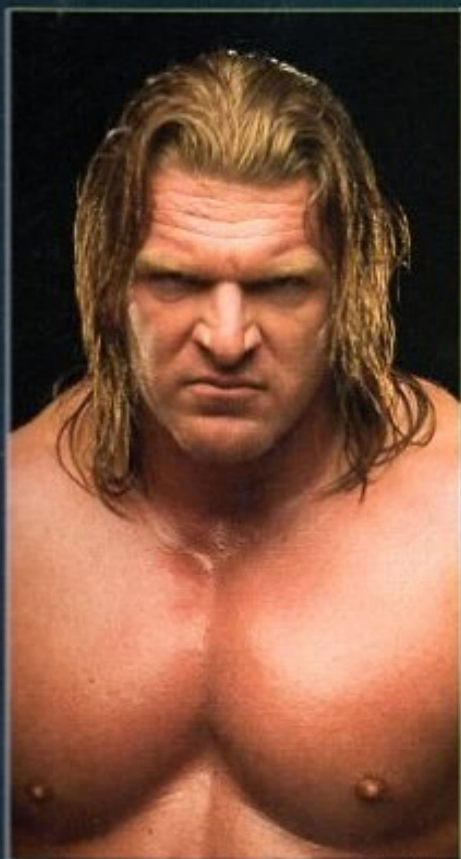
Winner:
Kane
23.6%

1st Runner-Up:
Triple H
18.1%

2nd Runner-Up:
"Rowdy" Roddy Piper
11.1%

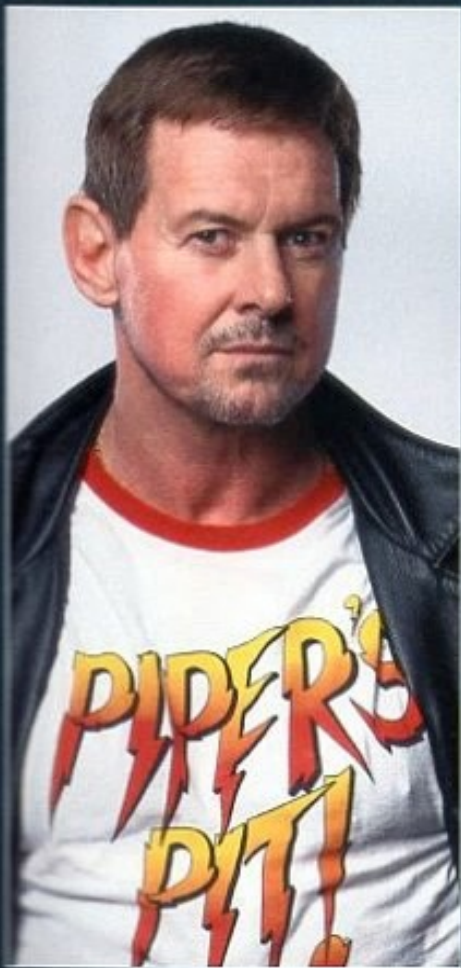
3rd Runner-Up:
Ric Flair
9.7%





Nevertheless, the "Nature Boy" did get his share of the vote, including this very impassioned message from Steven Miller, professor of journalism and mass media at Rutgers University:

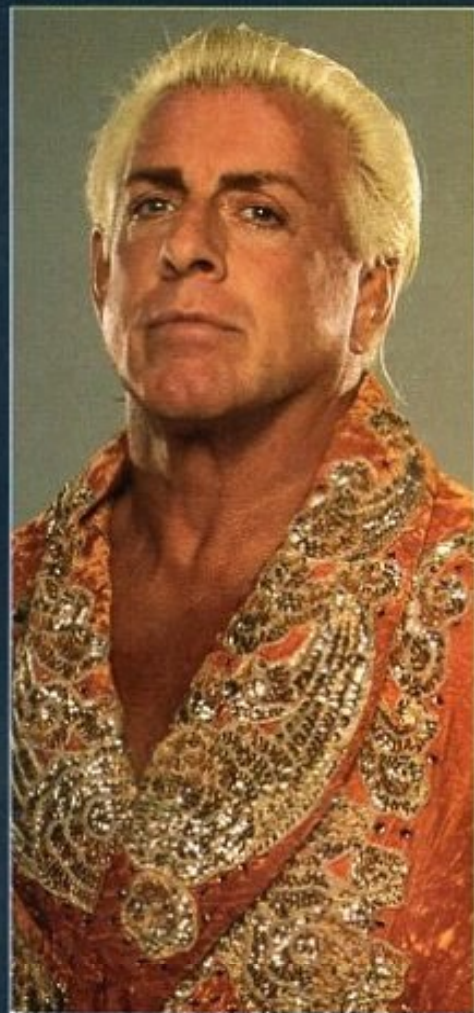
Ric Flair is not only the consummate wrestler, but he is also the "dirtiest player in the game." From his days in the Carolinas to WWE, the "Nature Boy" has always known how to set up his victims physically and mentally. Pokes in the eyes, low blows and foreign objects have always been part of the 16-time World Champion's arsenal. But it is his mind games that set him apart from the rest. He has been able to debilitate the best wrestlers of all time, from Jack Brisco to Harley Race to Terry Funk, by outsmarting, out-talking and out-thinking them. The pain from the Figure-Four is temporary, but the cracks in their mental armor were with his opponents before the match even started.



Of the remaining third of the vote, Hall of Famer "Classy" Freddie Blassie was the strongest, garnering 8.3 percent. There were also relatively strong showings for Hall of Famer Buddy Rogers, "Million-Dollar Man" Ted DiBiase, Honky Tonk Man, Kurt Angle, and our only write-in candidate, Stone Cold Steve Austin. Rogers, in particular, was the subject of the following treatise:

Can there be any real doubt? Flamboyant, formidable, totally self-confident. I can see him now: the sequined ring robes (costing thousands of dollars) surrounding a wonderfully muscular body; the golden, tanned skin; the strikingly blond hair; the ability to enrage men and entice women; a man who relished the title of most hated wrestler in the world. Quite simply, Buddy Rogers was a stallion in the ring, and resorted to any tactic to win.

So feared, despised and hated was Rogers, despite being the greatest attraction in professional wrestling, he was forced to wait 22 years to win the World Championship, and bested a great champion in doing so: Pat O'Connor. Rogers vs. O'Connor (June 30, 1961—"Black



Friday") sold out Chicago's Comiskey Park. The attendance, at that time, was a world record, with 38,622 fans filling the park. A viewing of the match shows that at least 95 percent of the fans in attendance were rooting for O'Connor. Did Rogers care? Not a bit. He loved the jeers. Never once did he desire to be the hero, nor did he consider himself the heel. He was what he was meant to be: the best of his time. His championship interview said it all, and further infuriated the wrestling world: "To a nicer guy, it couldn't happen!" Talk about conceit and self-confidence. This man had it all.

Wrestling today is a far different business than it was during this "Golden Age." However, it is still Shakespearean in its foundations, and "Nature Boy" Buddy Rogers would still be its greatest villain.

Daniel Olarnick
Official Court Reporter
Supreme Court, State of New York

THE GOOD, THE BAD
AND THE BIZARRE

OUT. WWE's Most RAGEOUS Superstars of All time

For as long as there has been a WWE, it has been known for its colorful cast of characters. While other wrestling promotions often took themselves too seriously, WWE reveled in the unusual, the outlandish and the surreal. Over the years, there have been countless Superstars who gave new meaning to the word "unorthodox," and boiling them all down to just 25 was a Herculean task. Nevertheless, we managed to do it, and we

proudly present to you our picks for the most outrageous Superstars in WWE history. Keep in mind that we were thinking specifically of those Superstars who were bizarre even by WWE standards, meaning they often didn't last long. This eliminates admittedly outrageous individuals like Doink the Clown and Honky Tonk Man, who enjoyed long tenures and became WWE mainstays.







TECHNO TEAM 2000
First Appearance: 1995 ▲

A futuristic duo composed of Travis & Troy, a.k.a. Chad Fortune & Erik Watts. They were unable to carve out a niche for themselves amidst a tag-team division made up of the likes of the Body Donnas and the Godwinns.

In Another Life: Erik Watts was the son of the legendary promoter "Cowboy" Bill Watts.



THE BEVERLY BROTHERS ▲
First Appearance: 1991

First under the management of John "The Coach" Tolos and later Lanny "The Genius" Poffo, Beau & Blake Beverly were rich snobs with a mean streak, who gave teams such as the Steiner Brothers and Headshrinkers a run for their money.

In Another Life: Mike Enos & Wayne Bloom, one of the last duos to hold the AWA World Tag Team Championship.



HARRY "BEAVER" CLEAVAGE ▲
First Appearance: 1999

Think of it as a 1950s family sitcom gone horribly wrong. Beaver Cleavage dressed like a little boy, and was accompanied to the ring by his "mother," the gorgeous Mrs. Cleavage. Eventually, the persona was too much for this Superstar to handle, and he literally abandoned it in mid-ring in one of WWE's most surreal moments.

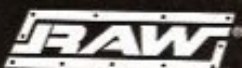
In Another Life: Mosh of the Headbangers, former World Tag Team champs.

**FRIAR FERGUSON/
BASTION BOOGER** ►
First Appearance(s): 1993

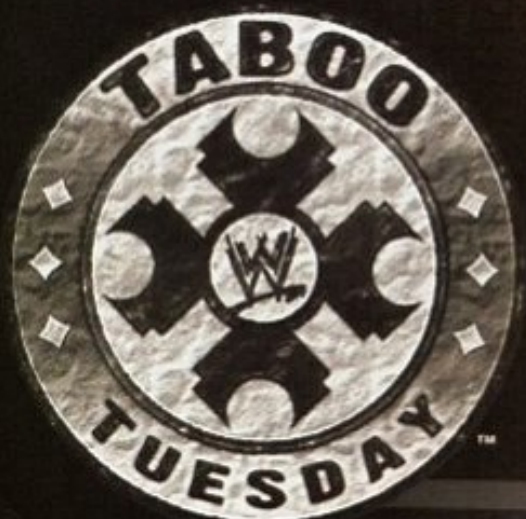
One was a bulbous, robed monk who used Gregorian chant as a ring entrance. The other was a bulbous overeater in filthy gray tights who came to the ring to the sound of loogey-hocking. What did they have in common? The man in the outfit.

In Another Life: Norman the Lunatic, who once feuded with hardcore legend Cactus Jack in WCW.





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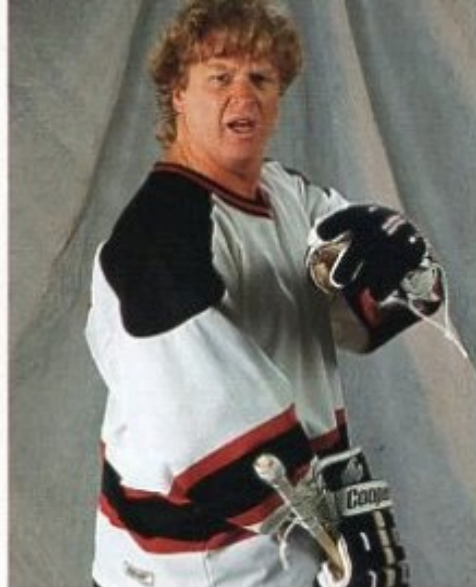
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THE GOON
First Appearance: 1996 ▲

Dressed in jersey and pads, this individual looked like he walked right from the rinks of the NHL into the rings of WWE. He brought a hockey stick to the ring, and wasn't above using it on his unfortunate opponents.

In Another Life: Veteran brawler Wild Bill Irwin, brother of the late Scott Irwin—one-half of former tag team champs the Yukon Lumberjacks.



T.L. HOPPER
First Appearance: 1996 ▲

What did sports-entertainment need more than a wrestling plumber? Well, it got one in the form of T.L. Hopper. A plunger was the weapon of choice for Mr. Hopper, for whom no opponent—or drain clog—was too big of a challenge.

In Another Life: Uncle Cletus, manager of the Godwinns.



AKEEM
First Appearance: 1988 ▲

With manager "The Doctor of Style" Slick in his corner, Akeem the African Dream was a sight to behold: a 400-pound white man strutting like a '70s pimp and talking in jive while dressed in traditional African garb.

In Another Life: One Man Gang. After a year in WWE as the Gang, Slick helped transform him into the African Dream.



DUKE "THE DUMPSTER" DROESE
First Appearance: 1994 ▲

"Time to take out the trash!" yelled Duke "The Dumpster" Droese as he pummeled his fallen foes with garbage cans. This wrestling sanitation worker had a heated rivalry with none other than "The Game," Triple H, beating him by DQ at the 1996 *Royal Rumble*.

In Another Life: Midwestern independent wrestler Rocco Gibraltar.



GIANT GONZALEZ
First Appearance: 1993 ▲

Standing nearly 8 feet tall, Giant Gonzalez was the tallest Superstar in WWE history. He burst on to the scene with manager Harvey Whippleman at the 1993 *Royal Rumble* and attacked Undertaker in a furry, airbrushed body suit.

In Another Life: El Gigante, the WCW titan who boasted victories over Ric Flair.



OUTBACK JACK
First Appearance: 1987 ▲

Capitalizing on the popularity of *Crocodile Dundee*, this combatant from Down Under

was missing a few teeth, but made up for it with personality. He entered arenas to the melodic strains of "Tie Me Kangaroo Down." Never mind that Jesse Ventura called him "Outhouse Jack."

In Another Life: Beats the hell out of us.



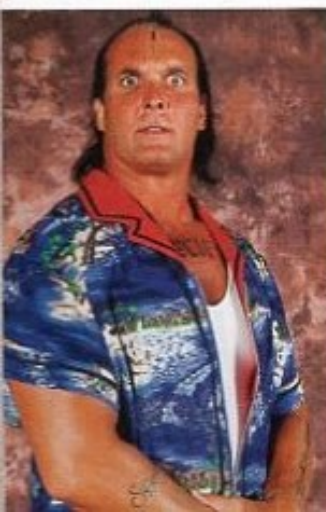
DAMIEN DEMENTO
First Appearance: 1992

From "The Outer Reaches of Your Mind," Damien Demento looked like he might have accompanied Attila the Hun in the sacking of Rome. He muttered to himself, stared into thin air, and faced Undertaker in *Monday Night Raw*'s first main event.

In Another Life: Reported to have tried his hand at hosting a kids' TV show. Heaven help us all.

WAYLON MERCY
First Appearance: 1995

Inspired by the Max Cady character in the 1991 film *Cape Fear*, Waylon Mercy was a cool customer with a deranged side lurking beneath the surface. His Hawaiian shirts certainly made him the most casually attired Superstar of all time.



In Another Life: Dangerous Danny Spivey, former U.S. Express tag-team partner of Barry Windham in WWE, and Skyscrapers tag-team partner of Undertaker in WCW.



THE ODDITIES
First Appearance: 1998

Golga. Kurrigan. Giant Silva. Luna. The Insane Clown Posse. Together they formed the most aptly named faction in WWE history. They were so bizarre they were riveting, and even Sable couldn't resist getting into the act for a while.

In Another Life: Under the mask of the Cartman-loving Golga was the man once known as Earthquake.



ALDO MONTOYA
First Appearance: 1994

Known as the "Portuguese Man O' War," Montoya proved you could still look tough with a yellow jockstrap on your head. One of Stone Cold Steve Austin's earliest acts of defiance was refusing to wrestle him.

In Another Life: ECW Heavyweight Champion Justin Credible.



BERTHA FAYE
First Appearance: 1995

With her boy toy/manager Harvey Whippleman at her side, the late Bertha Faye was sort of sports-entertainment's answer to Roseanne. Just not as likeable. She held the Women's Championship for two months.

In Another Life: An innovator of women's wrestling in Japan, where she competed as the sadistic Monster Ripper.



AVATAR
First Appearance: 1995

For a few short months in early 1995, this individual graced the WWE stage. Looking like a lost Power Ranger, he was a man of mystery who vanished from the scene before most knew what to make of him.

In Another Life: None other than *Sunday Night Heat* announcer and Head-lover Al Snow, who has also competed in WWE as Leif Cassidy and Shinobi.

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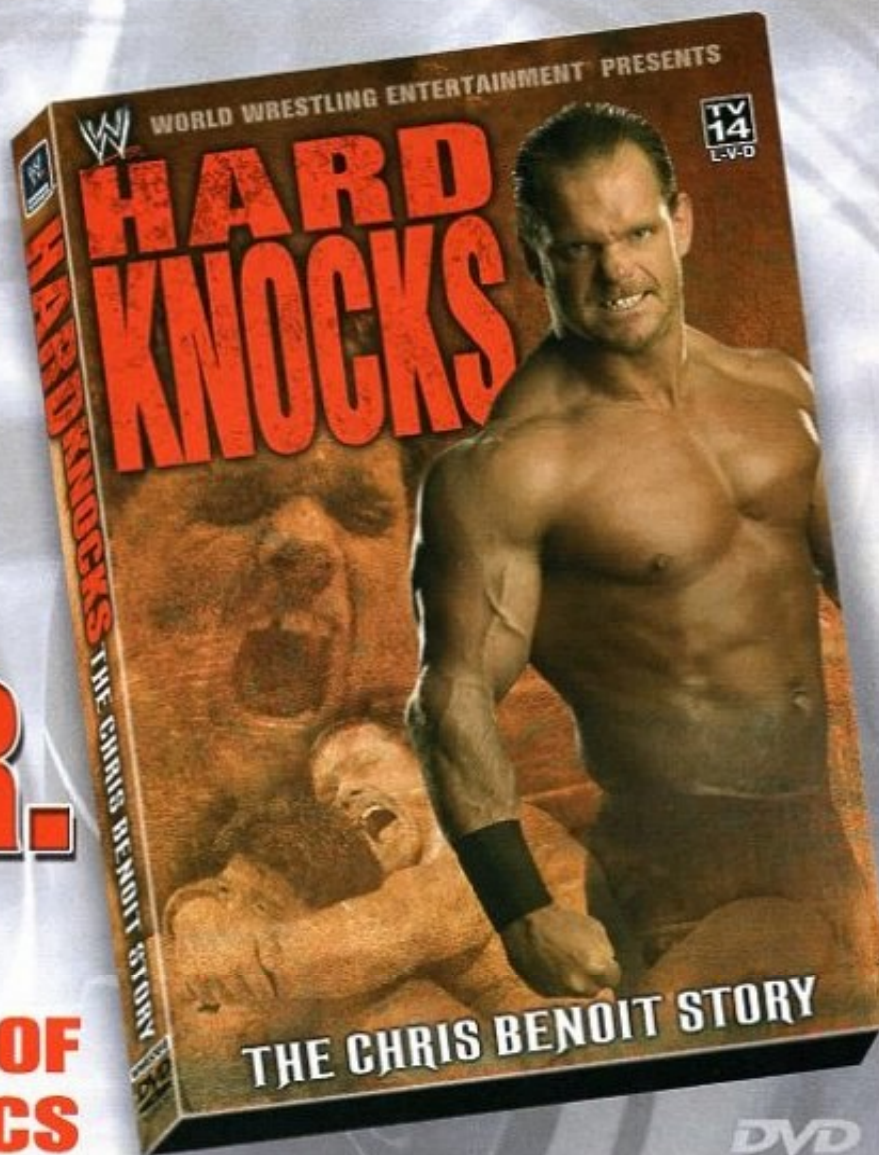
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GOBBLEDY GOOKER
First Appearance: 1990

He is the Elvis Presley, the Abe Lincoln, the Muhammad Ali of outrageous Superstars. The 1990 *Survivor Series* is best remembered for the debut of Undertaker, but it was also the night the Gobbledy Gooker danced with Mean Gene Okerlund.

In Another Life: Hector Guerrero, older brother of Eddie Guerrero.



PAPA SHANGO
First Appearance: 1992

He made Ultimate Warrior throw up and caused Mean Gene Okerlund to secrete black slime. The voodoo master even got in Undertaker's path for a little while. He first appeared at *WrestleMania VIII*, attacking Hulk Hogan after his retirement match.

In Another Life: Ho-master The Godfather.



JEAN-PIERRE LAFITTE
First Appearance: 1995

Claiming to be descended from "the greatest pirate of all time," Lafitte made a name for himself by stealing the leather jacket of Bret "Hit Man" Hart, leading to a match between the two at *In Your House III*. Hart won.

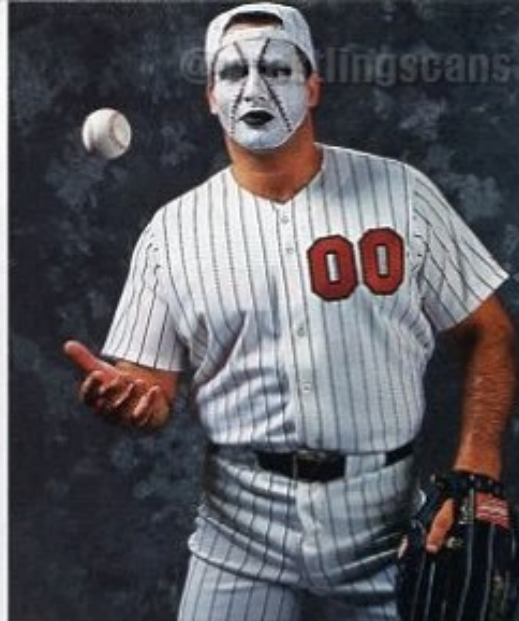
In Another Life: One-half of three-time World Tag Team Champions the Quebecers, along with Jacques Rougeau.



KWANG
First Appearance: 1993

Spewing green mist and hiding his face behind an intimidating mask, Kwang was a tough and dangerous brawler. Plus, he is the only WWE Superstar ever named after a sound effect.

In Another Life: Puerto Rican sensation Savio Vega, ally of Razor Ramon.



ABE "KNUCKLEBALL" SCHWARTZ
First Appearance: 1994

With major league baseball players on strike and the popularity of the great American pastime at an all-time low, Abe "Knuckleball" Schwartz showed up to rub it in all of our faces, at one point even going on strike himself!

In Another Life: "The Brooklyn Brawler" Steve Lombardi, the only Superstar in WWE history to ever go from Italian to Jewish. ■

HONORABLE MENTION

The Berserker	Man Mountain Rock
Xanta Klaus	Salvatore Sincere
Skinner	Nailz
Big Bully Busick	Uncle Elmer
Dean Douglas	The Machines

Who's the most outrageous of all time? Since *SmackDown! Magazine* is the magazine of the people, we will once again look to you, the fans, to answer that question. E-mail your picks to us at sdmag@wwe.com (Subject line: "Most Outrageous"), or send them the old-fashioned way to:

Most Outrageous Superstars
SmackDown! Magazine
1241 East Main Street
Stamford, CT 06902

We'll publish the results in our Holiday 2004 issue, on sale November 23.

Kenzo Suzuki: *Rising Star from the*



BY KEITH ELLIOT GREENBERG

He contorts his face in anger, baring his teeth. As Kenzo Suzuki hits his foe across the chest with a hard chop, the *SmackDown!* announcers say that the hulking Japanese newcomer has come to WWE on a mission "fueled by hate."

His manner suggests that Suzuki believes that he's some type of conqueror, like the Japanese royals who are said to have been anointed by the spirits. Before his match, he's carried to the ring on a throne by obedient, masked *ansatsu-sha*, or assassins. In his corner, his mysterious companion, Hiroko, stands and waits, her face painted like that of a porcelain doll, her robes and fan suggesting hints of her country's *geisha* heritage. But instead of specializing in tea serving, calligraphy and playing the *shamisen*—a stringed instrument—like traditional *geishas*, Hiroko appears to exude the same evil as her charge.

How did a modern, educated man who thrived in college

sports and spent time living in the West end up on such a vengeful path—so different than those chosen by Tajiri, the "Japanese Buzzsaw" on the *Raw* roster, and Funaki, who characterizes himself as *SmackDown!*'s premier announcer?

The answer can be found in Hekinan City, near Nagoya, Japan, a place that was rural and traditional when Suzuki grew up there.

Kenzo's father was a real estate manager, and it was widely assumed that the boy would forsake college to work in the family business. But Suzuki's athletic prowess made him think otherwise. In high school, he played baseball, standing out as a pitcher on the same circuit that would produce future major leaguer Ichiro Suzuki. But after losing an important game, Kenzo—the tallest boy in his grade—chose to focus on a sport that allowed him to take advantage of his power.

In 1993, he helped lead Japan's high school rugby team to a stunning upset over Great Britain.

Rising Sun



"I loved rugby," he says through a translator. "There was no padding. It's body to body. I liked tackling my opponents."

His goal at the time was to participate in the heralded Sou-mei Match, the annual clash between rugby giants Meiji and Waseda universities. But, first, Suzuki relocated to Bath, England to refine his rugby skills. Then he enrolled at Meiji, a school with an alumni list that includes wrestling stars like Seiji Sakaguchi, Masa Saito and Naoya Ogawa.

"Our team's philosophy was 'go forward'—never let anyone or anything push you back," he says. "It prepared me for life in WWE. I played with broken arms. I cut open my Achilles tendon. But I didn't care. I kept going because I wanted to win."

Like another dedicated college athlete, Kurt Angle, Suzuki's first foray into the professional world involved working in television. A journalism graduate, Kenzo took a job as a sports producer at Tokai TV.

"I was frustrated," he says. "I didn't want to be reporting on sports. I wanted to be the one everyone else was reporting about."

So when Sakaguchi, who later served as an executive in New Japan Pro Wrestling, made Suzuki an offer, the strapping youngster entered the company's *dojo*, or training camp.

"It was like being in the Army," Suzuki says, remembering the daily rituals of 500 squats and pushups, continuous neck bridges and martial arts training. "If you were starting out, they called you a 'green boy.' Green boys couldn't go out at night. In training, you'd have to do twice the number of exercises as the veterans. You'd cook their meals and wash their backs. That's how it is in Japan. You respect your elders."

His respect of tradition notwithstanding, Suzuki was openly cynical about this arrangement.

"I knew that, pretty soon, those guys would be washing my back, and cooking for me," he says. "They'd still be in Japan, and I'd be in WWE, carried on a throne to the ring."

Because of this attitude, Suzuki flouted the rules. He ignored the *dojo*'s stringent dress code by wearing flashy colors in training, enjoyed the nearby nightlife, and snuck away to Hawaii for a vacation.

"The older wrestlers tried to discipline me," he says. "They'd beat me and punch me to try to make me humble. But pain doesn't bother me. And I knew that I was going to be a star. So

I broke the rules again."

On January 4, 2000, Suzuki debuted against Manabu Nakanishi. What made the occasion unique was that the battle took place at the Tokyo Dome, one of the most famous arenas in Japan.

"It would be like having your first match in Madison Square Garden on a pay-per-view," Suzuki says. "Everybody knew me from rugby—except, in rugby, people came to see the team. Now, they were coming to see me."

His arrogance, though, could not help him win this contest. Suzuki lost quickly, and he finally understood that he'd embarked on a project tougher than any he'd ever attempted. Yet, his confidence remained strong and, within months, he'd won the Young Lions Cup, a prestigious tournament to determine the company's top rookie, with a victory over Shinya Makabe in the finals.

"I discovered that I had ring magic," Suzuki says.

But earlier that night, tragedy struck when Suzuki's friend, Masakazu Fukuda, hit his head after taking a spear. Fukuda became sluggish, then collapsed on the mat. He was rushed to the hospital, where he later died from a bleeding tumor on his brain.

"I dedicated my career to him and am honoring him every time I win," he says.

In 2003, after a stint in the World Japan promotion, Suzuki decided that it was time to go to WWE.

"That had been my goal since I'd been in the *dojo*," he says. "Now, WWE was running tours of Japan, and everybody in the country was talking about it. I knew it was my destiny to become the biggest Japanese star WWE has ever had."



"The older wrestlers tried to discipline me. But pain doesn't bother me. I knew I was going to be a star."

Clearly, he'd be different than Toru Tanaka, Mr. Fuji, Taka Michinoku and other Japanese who have tried to rule WWE through the years. In Hiroko, Suzuki has a unique valet. Despite her demure façade, she's calculating and vicious, surprising Suzuki's adversaries with a handful of ceremonial salt to the eyes. Still, Suzuki knows how to win on his own, paralyzing foes with a piercing nerve hold below the chin that cuts off oxygen.

In his vignettes, Suzuki has displayed a symbol resembling a small temple supported by two pillars—a mark of the gods.

"I am an emperor," he says. "And in the Shinto religion, we believe that the emperor has the blood of the gods. So when I get in the ring, my opponent is not just wrestling me. He has to worry about the many gods that are inside me. The gods cannot be defeated. And, one day soon, America will bow to this emperor's reign." ■

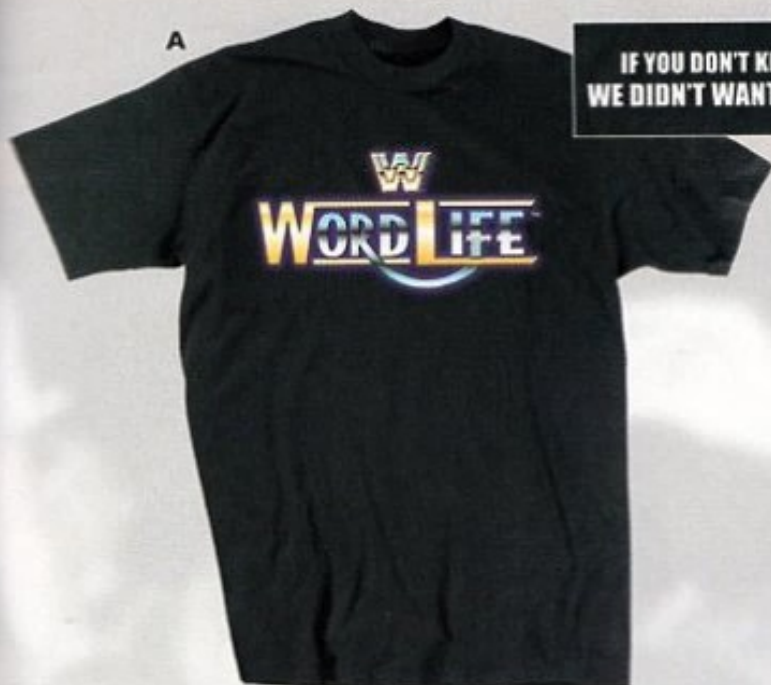
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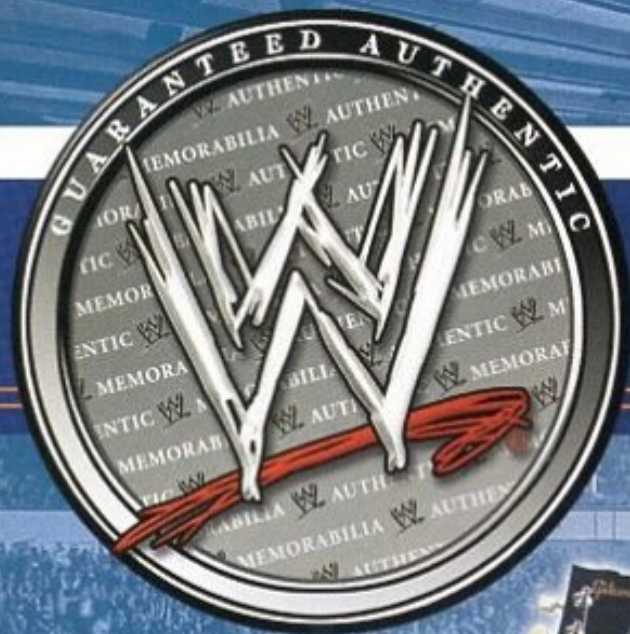


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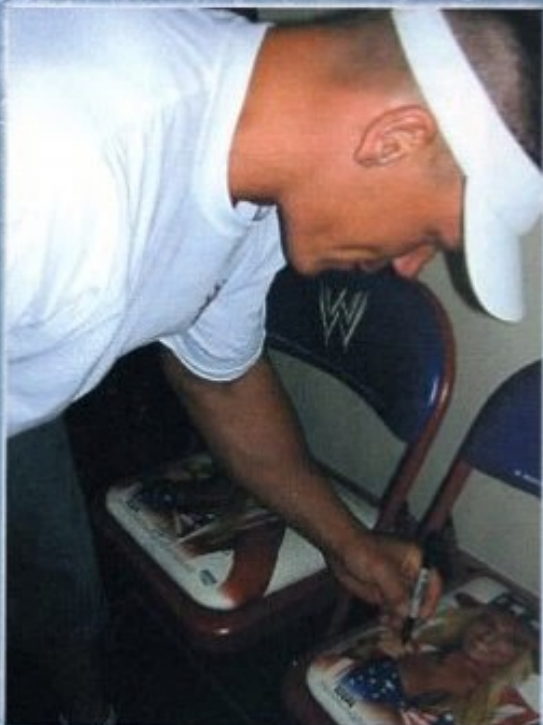
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The Legacy of Polish Power

"Hit my stomach," the bronzed 63-year-old immigrant challenges as he rises from his seat. He plants his feet on the ground and motions to his abdomen.

When his guest hesitates, the man continues, "I'm not joking around. Hit it."

The startled visitor thrusts his fist forward. Ivan Putski looks down at the set of knuckles making contact with his iron mid-section, and then wrinkles up his face in a radiantly self-assured smile.

"Not bad for an old man," says the WWE Hall of Famer.

It's been about two decades since Putski regularly climbed into the ring at Madison Square Garden, boasting a set of 20-inch arms, 30-inch thighs and a waist of just 33 inches. At his heaviest, Putski tipped the scales at 305 pounds. Today, his weight is down to 180, but his exercise regimen nearly the same.

"The only difference is that I use lighter weight," he says, raising an eyebrow at his

agent, former wrestling writer Scott Epstein. "But I'm still strong. My strength is genetic."

Putski's father was a powerful man, as was his grandfather. Although he would later bill himself from Krakow, Poland, his hometown was actually Yeuscie Bieskuye, near the Ukrainian border. In the aftermath of World War II, Ivan and his relatives caught one of the last ships for Ellis Island, and relocated to Smithville, Texas.

"We picked cotton," he says. "We loved it. We were happy to be here. I think we knew that the doors would open up for us."

Putski saw his future on the athletic field. He played fullback at Southwest Texas State, and entertained offers from the NFL's Detroit Lions as well as the Toronto Argonauts of the Canadian Football League (CFL). But by the late 1960s, he'd shifted his attention to professional wrestling.

Using his real last name, he called himself "Jungle" Jim Bednarski while he worked for San Antonio promoter Joe Blanchard. He then went up to Leroy McGuirk's Tulsa-based territory. It was there that he was christened Ivan Putski, capitalizing on his Polish heritage.

"There weren't a lot of Poles in Oklahoma," Putski says, "and I still didn't feel that comfortable with the language. I used to bring my brother, Fred, with me, just so he could translate if I ran into a hard time. I don't know what it was, but I connected with the people."

Most likely, this had less to do with Putski's ethnicity than his implausible might. Putski fascinated audiences by ripping phone books in half, placing basketballs in headlocks and popping them, and positioning himself against a wall while holding back rubber-burning cars with his feet.

He moved on to Houston, where fans would be called out of the stands to try punching Ivan in the stomach. Once, promoter Paul Boesch mounted a ladder on television, and came down on Putski's abs. There were no ill intentions; Putski was simply displaying his attributes.

After a stint in the American Wrestling Association (AWA), Putski debuted in WWE,



Ivan Putski was known for the chiseled bodybuilder's physique that was a favorite of fans throughout his illustrious career.



where he immediately connected with the fans in the company's Northeastern cities. "Man, I was a hot item," he says. "But it wasn't just me. The fans were ethnic themselves, and they loved ethnic heroes—Bruno Sammartino, Pedro Morales, even Antonino Rocca a few years before. Poles cheered for Italians, and Italians cheered for Poles. The thing they cared about was you were ethnic."

After his victories, Putski would grab the microphone and proclaim, "Polish Power!" His fans were his "Polish Army," his finisher, the "Polish Hammer." Occasionally, he'd munch on a kielbasa during an interview, or entertain the crowd by singing the hits of Polish crooner Bobby Vinton. "I spoke English perfectly by then," he says. "But I'd still go into a restaurant and order by pointing at the picture on the menu."

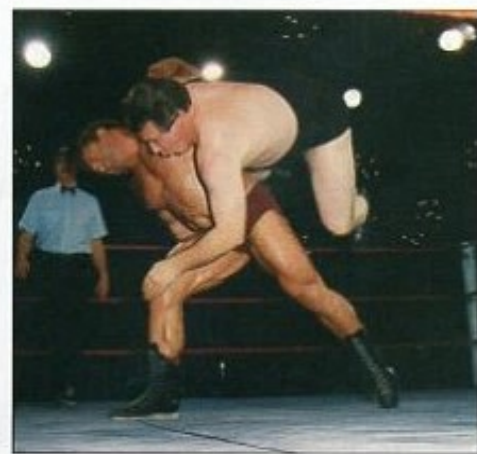
Putski enjoyed a special affinity with Jewish fans, many of which had roots in Eastern Europe, and—like his Catholic relatives—personally understood the horrors of World War II. "I'd walk through the Diamond District in New York with my wife," Putski says, "and these old men would come running out of their stores, handing me watches."

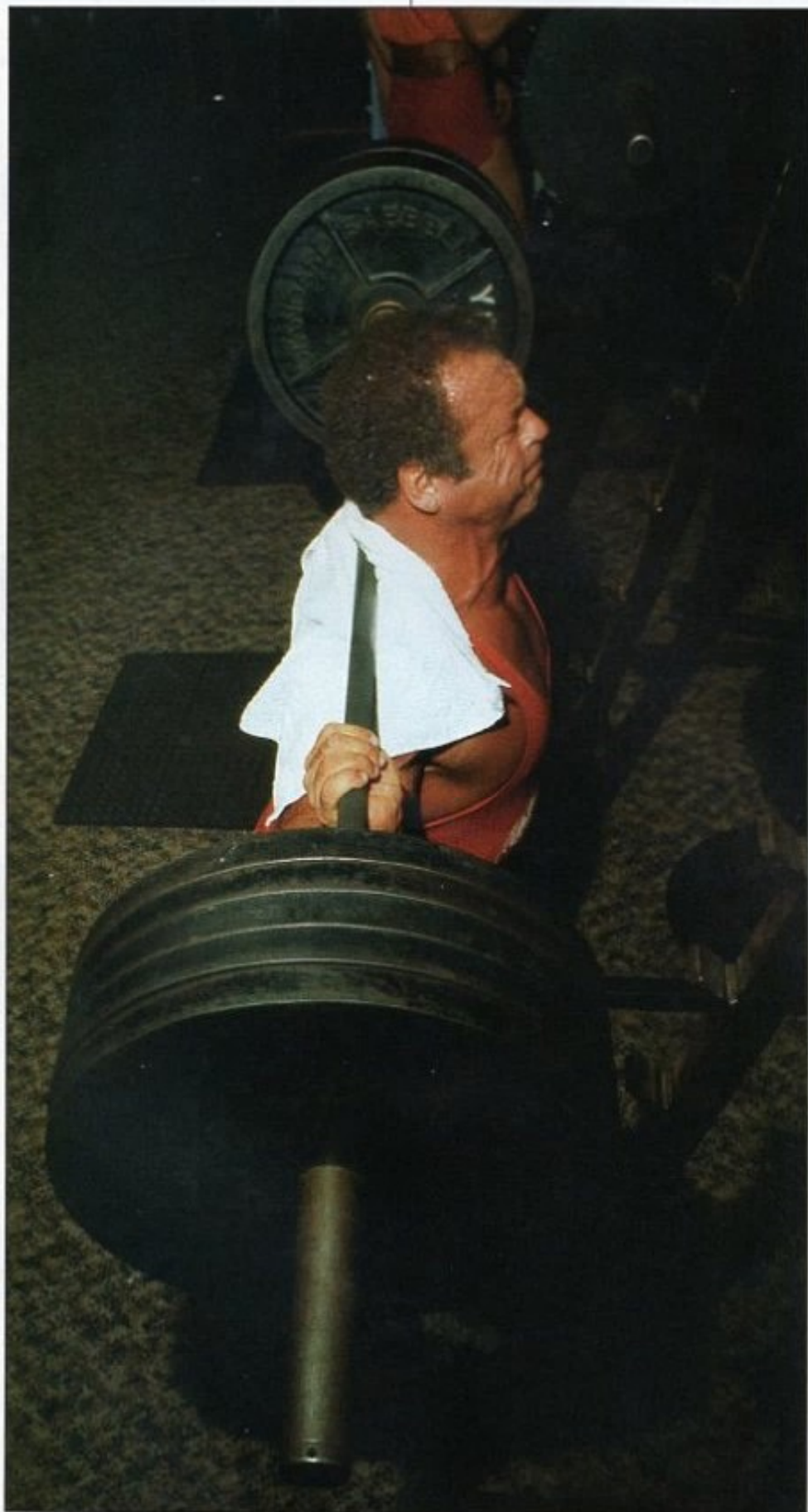
Despite his popularity, Ivan was not known for playing by the rules. "I punched and kicked and poked people in the eyes," he says. "But the fans always cheered me."

His opponents were usually powerhouses, as well: Spiros Arion, Ken Patera, Ivan Koloff, "Cowboy" Bobby Duncum, Sr., Bulldog Brower and Ernie "The Cat" Ladd. When "Superstar" Billy Graham dethroned Bob Backlund for the WWE Championship in 1977, Putski became a top contender. "People believed in us," Putski says. "All the

ingredients were there."

In 1979, Putski and Tito Santana captured the World Tag Team titles from the Valiant Brothers, uniting Ivan's Polish Army with the organization's loyal corps of Latino fans: "I





Ken Patera (above, in headlock) was one of the many villains that Putski faced during his stint as one of the sport's most beloved heroes.

couldn't have picked a better partner. Me and Tito fit together like a hand and glove."

Five years later, Putski was still in WWE as it expanded around the globe and *Hulkamania* took root. It was at that time that he engaged in a memorable battle of the strongmen with future Minnesota Gov. Jesse "The Body" Ventura.

Later, Putski would return to Blanchard's promotion in San Antonio in its waning days, conducting interviews in the Texas accent he'd legitimately developed. When his son Scott appeared in WWE in the 1990s, Putski coached him behind the scenes, and he periodically accompanied him to the ring.

Scott continues to wrestle on the independent circuit. "He's good," Ivan says. "He may end up in WWE again—and you might see me with him."

In the meantime, Putski lives within the Austin city limits in a 2.5-acre home landscaped to resemble a tropical forest. And whenever he ventures out, he discovers that remnants of his Polish Army are very much in abundance.

"I always take the time to sign that autograph," he says. "If it wasn't for that fan, where would I be? Those are the people who followed me for all these years, and I'll always be grateful to them." ■



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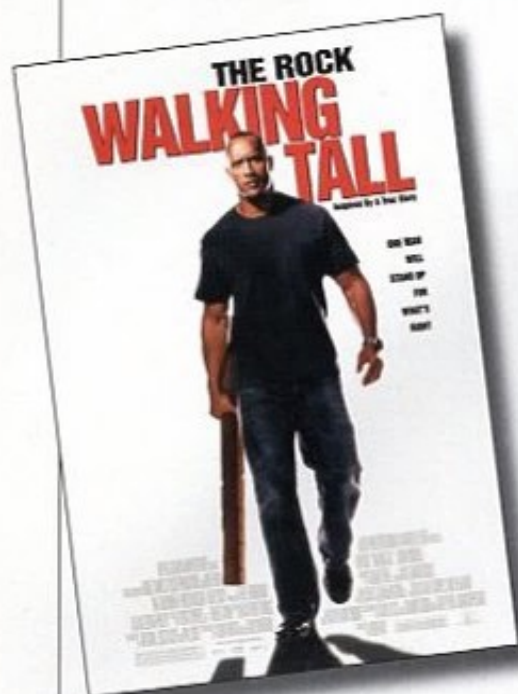
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The Rock Speaks Loudly and Carries a Big Stick

By Anthony Cali

The Rock's performances in *The Scorpion King* and *The Rundown* may have been awesome, but neither compare to the Great One's latest action-packed feature, *Walking Tall*. This masterpiece is a throwback to the great action movies of the past, and tells a gritty, hard-hitting story

to which anyone can relate.

Inspired by the original 1973 motion picture starring Joe Don Baker, *Walking Tall* is based on a true story.

When Sgt. Chris Vaughn (The Rock) returns to civilian life following an 8-year stay in the service, he finds that things are a bit different. The lumber mill where his father worked has closed down,

dles his longtime friendship with Ray (Johnny Knoxville of *Jackass*), whom he appoints as his new deputy.

A role The Rock was born to play, the vigilante sheriff uses any means necessary to "lay the smack down" on his foes—including numerous WWE-style maneuvers. And while many actors in Hollywood rely on stunt men to perform their intense

"An action-movie lover's feast!" — UPN

"Rock-solid action!" — Access Hollywood

"Endlessly enjoyable and a lot of fun" — Fox

young children are experimenting with drugs, adult novelty stores are cropping up, and the entire town is reliant on a corrupt casino owned and operated by Vaughn's former friend, Jay Hamilton (Neal McDonough).

Within his first week back, Vaughn realizes just how corrupt both Hamilton and his town have become, and after Hamilton's violent assault is ignored by the local police, Vaughn decides to take matters into his own hands.

He single handedly tries to destroy the casino, but fails, and subsequently challenges both Hamilton and the town's legal system. After a dramatic victory, Vaughn decides to run for sheriff.

Using nothing more than his hands, his wit, and a trusty 2x4, Vaughn springs into action, destroying everything in his path.

On his journey, he also discovers a lost romance with an old flame, Deni (Ashley Scott), and rekin-

action scenes, The Rock does almost all of his own stunts, many of which are revealed on "Fight the Good Fight"—a bonus featurette included on the DVD.

The release also includes several bonus features, such as deleted scenes, hilarious bloopers, an alternate ending, a photo gallery, and the original theatrical trailer.

There is also optional audio commentary by The Rock, as well as commentary by the director (Kevin Bray) and the crew.

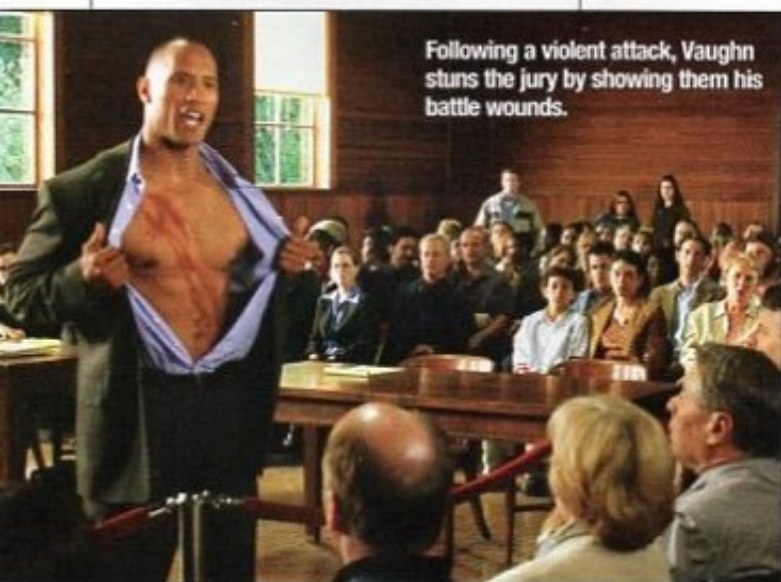
Altogether, this DVD contains several hours of action and excitement featuring the most electrifying man in sports & entertainment.

If you liked watching The Rock in his first two films, you won't be disappointed by his latest flick.

The Great One's physicality, athleticism, aura and sense of humor come through like never before and make *Walking Tall* a true action/adventure masterpiece. ■



Armed & ready, Sgt. Chris Vaughn will do anything necessary to protect his family.



Following a violent attack, Vaughn stuns the jury by showing them his battle wounds.



A Bloody Good Time

By Michael Dworkis

If you are a fan of the fast fighting of Dragon Ball Z, then you need to check out the intense action from FUNimation's spectacular title, *Yu Yu Hakusho*.

The story revolves around a boy named Yusuke Urameshi, and is a tale of the supernatural battle between the forces of good and evil. The series begins when Yusuke

is killed in a car accident while rescuing a young boy. His good deed doesn't go unnoticed—Koenma, the son of the King of the Spirit World, agrees to give him his life back in return for becoming a Spirit Detective of Earth.

The series continues as Yusuke enlists the help of Kuwabara, his friend from school, to help him in his missions. They are joined by Kurama and Hiei, fighters who possess their own mysterious powers. Together, they take on the most perilous of quests.

In previous DVDs, *The Seven*, *Dark Indulgence*, *Dangerous Games*, and *Old Rivals—New Problems*, Yusuke and his group of allies continued their quest to stop Shinobu Sensui—a former Spirit Detective turned evil—from opening a tunnel between the Demon World and the Living World to enslave mankind.

As Yusuke gets closer to facing off with the maniacal Sensui, Kuwabara and the others are trapped by Sensui's partner, Itsuki, leaving Yusuke to face this ultimate evil alone, until the King of the Spirit World's son, Koenma, intervenes.

In the newest DVD, *In the Blood*, the story of *Yu Yu Hakusho* takes a turn for the worse as a horde of demons are preparing to invade Earth. Koenma saves Yusuke from certain death after an initial encounter with Sensui. However, it seems that the fight which wages between good and evil may never end.

Koenma is prepared to use an ultimate weapon to stop the demons from invading Earth, but with Kuwabara and the rest



Bruised and wounded, Yusuke continues to fight as humanity's last defense against evil.

of Yusuke's teammates trapped by Itsuki, it's up to Koenma and Yusuke to stop Sensui. Itsuki reveals to Yusuke's friends the story of how Sensui rose to such immense power.

The inevitable struggle comes to a frightening conclusion as a huge sacrifice is made to save humanity. Can the forces of good overcome the evil of all evils? There is only one way to find out who shall stand and who shall fall.

If you like fast-paced fighting, and crave the mystical battles between good and evil, this series will satisfy your craving.

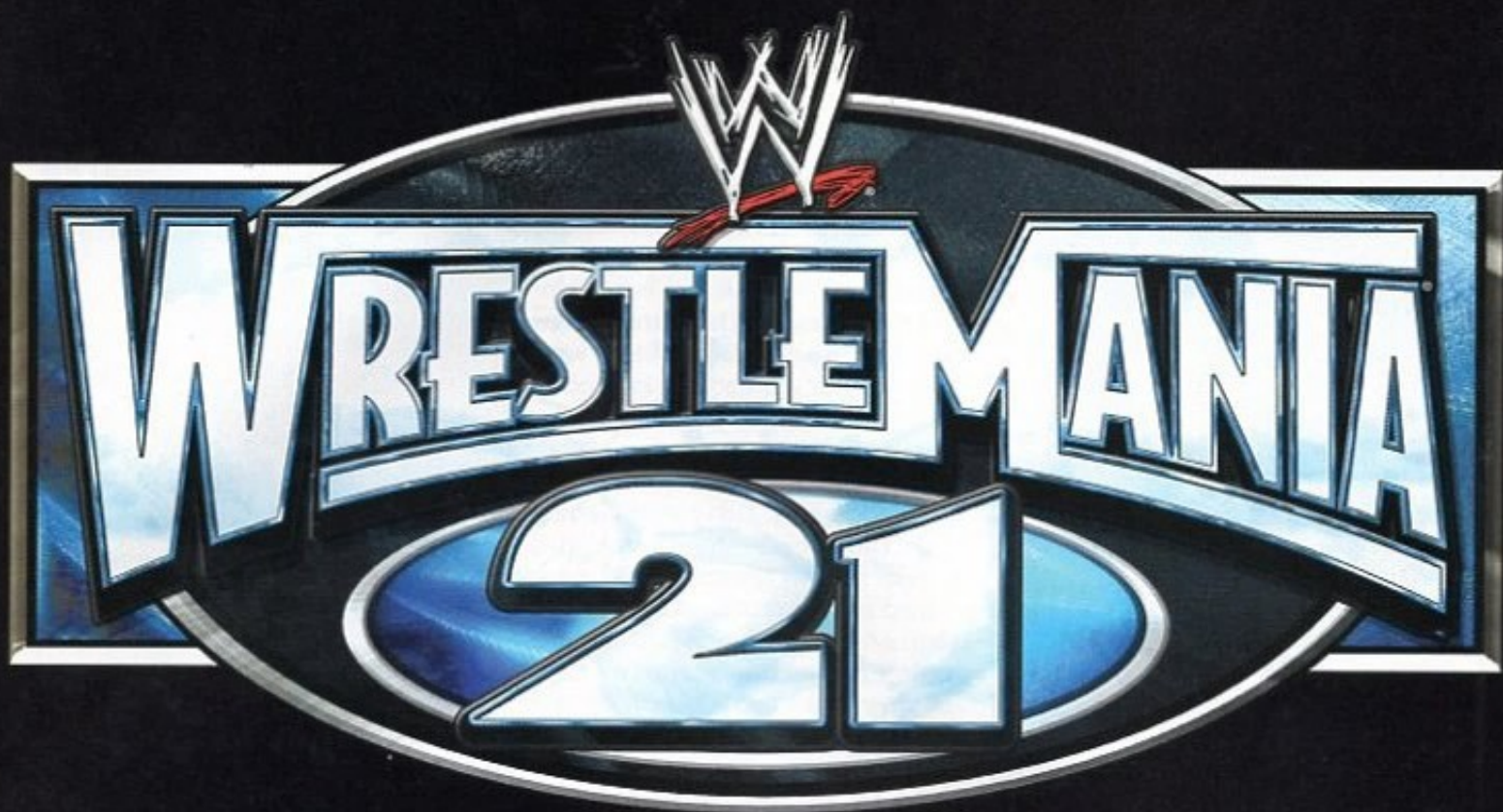
The DVD features English dubbing, or Japanese with English subtitles, as well as numerous extras, like in-depth character profiles, exclusive music from the series, and, best of all, trailers for upcoming episodes and special DVD releases that are must-haves for your collection.

This DVD is uncut, and is recommended for age 13 and up.

Note: There is strong violence and mature language on this DVD. It is important for parents to check the rating of each DVD to make sure that content is suitable for youngsters. ■



Yusuke Urameshi (front) stands ready with his allies (center) to face his opponents (left & right).



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